Quality Review Report

2016-2017

I.S. 051 Edwin Markham
Junior High-Intermediate-Middle 31R051

20 Houston St.
Staten Island
NY 10302

Principal: Nicholas Mele

Dates of Review:
March 21, 2017 - March 22, 2017

Lead Reviewer: Debra Tasioudis
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. 051 Edwin Markham serves students in grade six through grade eight. 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

### 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>Area of Focus</td>
<td>Developing</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>Developing</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
### School Culture

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

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<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>
</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>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

### Systems for Improvement

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

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Area</th>
<th>Rating</th>
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<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>
Findings
School leaders and staff consistently communicate expectations that are connected to a path to college and career readiness to families. Teacher teams and staff establish a culture for learning that consistently communicates high expectations for all students, particularly through learning experiences that expose students to the arts, high school, and college.

Impact
School leaders and teacher help families understand student progress and make expectations for the path to college clear. Teachers and staff offer ongoing and detailed feedback, guidance, and experiences that prepare students for high school and college.

Supporting Evidence

- A review of school records demonstrate that 66 percent of parents and the majority of students are registered for the school’s online student information portal. This system allows families to review their child’s schedule, attendance, exams, and average in each class. While parents shared that some teachers were more diligent than others in keeping records up-to-date, parents shared that all teachers used it, and some also used a phone application that allowed them to text with the teacher about student progress as well as expectations for homework and projects. Parents also shared that the faculty offers parent-teacher conferences for parents to learn about their children’s success, and one parent shared that although she was unable to come for the conference night, teachers made time to meet with her on a Tuesday afternoon, a regular time that teachers and parents use to communicate about student progress.

- In February, the school leaders hosted an articulation breakfast for parents of students who will begin school in September. During the breakfast, parents are introduced to the school leaders, guidance counselors, and the Parent Teacher Association (PTA). Parents were introduced to the school’s academies and their foci, as well as the dual language magnet program and given the opportunity to express interest in the programs. Parents of lower grade students shared that expectations for success were made clear the summer before students began, through a five week summer academy. As one parent shared, the program is designed for students transitioning from fifth to sixth grade, and really helped to “prepare the students and parents for the expectations of sixth grade and lets us [the students and parents] get to know the building and some teachers before they even begin.”

- Parents and students articulated that the school guidance team helps them pick high schools and explore colleges. Through the newly opened college office, forty or so students got the opportunity to interact with high school and college students on their campuses. School leaders have also adopted Naviance, an online progress tracking system to college that is currently used by eighth graders to explore colleges and will be used by seventh graders in the future. Parents and students also shared that there were meetings about how to fill out high school applications, and hosts a fair for the Staten Island high schools to make their programs and options clear for students and families.

- Throughout the year, there are a dozen or so high school and college trips are offered to sixth, seventh, and eighth graders, as well as trips to Broadway plays and other cultural events to expand student horizons and set high expectations. Students shared that teacher expectations are also high in their classrooms. As one student shared, “Our drama teacher helps us by letting us read Shakespeare and explaining what is going to happen in high school and teaches us in the same way so we will understand what to do when we get there.”
Findings

Across classrooms, teaching practices are beginning to reflect the school leader’s beliefs that students learn best through providing opportunities for students to engage in small group instruction and student-led conversations. While high levels of student thinking and discussion were present in a few classes, low rigor tasks and teacher-led discussions persisted in others.

Impact

Teaching practices informed by the Danielson *Framework for Teaching* are becoming aligned. Although some tasks and discussions result in high levels of thinking, across classrooms, levels of student thinking and participation remain uneven.

Supporting Evidence

- In five of the nine classrooms visited, students engaged in small group instruction with some opportunities for group thinking. In a seventh grade math class, students worked independently or in pairs to solve one step equations using inverse operations on both sides of the equations. Math problems were posted around the room and students moved in pairs, or alone to solve problems, creating student-centered instruction. In this class, the Integrated Co-Teaching (ICT) teachers and paraprofessional acted as facilitators for the activity, rather than guiding instruction. Similarly, in another math classroom, students had an opportunity to work together in small groups to solve and graph two-step inequalities. In this class, rather than lead the students to the answers through guided discussion, the teacher asked questions of the groups of students, ensuring that group thinking led students to success in a small group task, a strong articulation of the school’s beliefs about how students learn best. In most other classes, while students were seated together, or encouraged to work together, they were given independent tasks, limiting the need and opportunity for students to think together in small groups.

- Across classrooms, students produced varying levels of meaningful work products. In an eighth grade U.S. History Regents Exam class, students were grouped in different levels all produced meaningful work products, citing evidence from primary and secondary sources about the Great Depression. In mostly independent work, students were asked to explain how overproduction in farming contributed to the Great Depression in writing. Students produced writing at various levels, some annotating the text for relevant information, and others using a schoolwide writing strategy for citing evidence on their own, with no needed guidance from the teacher. This level of work produced by students was not observed evenly across classrooms. Lower levels of student thinking were evident in other classrooms where learners were asked to solve six to eight similar math problems during independent practice with little explanation of their thinking, or students were asked to find right-there answers in a science textbook and copy them into their graphic organizers.

- High levels of student thinking were reflected in students discussions in four of the nine classes visited, including the math class described above. In other classrooms, teacher-led discussions were more prevalent, or students engaged in independent tasks with little discussion. In a sixth and seventh grade dual language class, students worked independently to create a media source based on evidence from a non-fiction text about the history of books. While a few students talked with a peer about the task, most worked independently with no discussion. This independent work with access to a peer for discussion, but little conversation was observed across several classrooms, limiting the level of student thinking demonstrated class discussions.
## Additional Finding

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

### Findings

School leaders and faculty ensure that curricula are aligned to the Common Core Learning Standards. Curricula and academic tasks consistently emphasize rigorous habits and higher-order skills.

### Impact

The faculty makes purposeful decisions to build coherence and promote post-secondary readiness for all students. Curricula is accessible for a variety of learners; however, demonstration of student learning is not yet coherent across grades and content areas.

### Supporting Evidence

- Lesson and unit plans reviewed include learning targets, planning for tasks and activities so that all learners, including students with disabilities and ELLs are able to engage in meaningful and rigorous tasks that are differentiated. Criteria for success are noted in curricula and are content specific and aligned to lesson objectives. In one plan on ratios and proportional relationships, students are expected to know how to set up the percent proportion, where to input the data into the percent proportion, and how to use cross multiplication to set up an equation. Success for criteria noted in a social studies plan include students being able to explain how overproduction led to unemployment, analysis of a political cartoon and its relation to the impact on the farming industry, and explaining the connection between supply and demand and a healthy economy.

- Additional documents show that teachers use anticipated student responses in planning that are provided by the curriculum and based on knowledge of their students. A learning target centered on students making connections and distinctions between individuals, ideas and events included two anticipated responses that informed the teachers’ assessment section of the lesson.

- A science plan on the male and female reproductive systems tasked students with explaining the functions of the parts associated with each reproductive system. Additionally, students had to determine the function of the placenta, umbilical cord, amniotic sac and fluid as it relates to the fetus, and describe the process of human development from the zygotic stage to the end of the third trimester and birth. The lesson plan included visual representations using reproductive system anatomy cards, heterogeneous grouping, and student choice in how to demonstrate their understanding of the sperm pathway through the male reproductive system in written response or using a concept map.
Additional Finding

**Quality Indicator:**

| 2.2 Assessment | Rating: | Developing |

**Findings**

The school has few common assessments in place, such as schoolwide reading assessment, and end of unit tasks in ELA and math that are used by teachers to measure student progress toward goals across grades and subject areas. Across classrooms, teachers’ assessment practices inconsistently reflect the use of ongoing checks for understanding and student self-assessment.

**Impact**

Results of common assessments and subsequent analysis are inconsistently used to adjust curricula and instruction across classrooms. Teachers are beginning to develop effective in-the-moment adjustments to meet the learning needs of students.

**Supporting Evidence**

- During the first leadership meeting, school leaders shared that they were no longer using most schoolwide assessments, mock exams, diagnostic, predictive, or performance series assessments throughout the year, as they did not find them to be meaningful. The school leaders instead stated a preference for formative classroom assessments, and that teachers are using information from these assessments every day in lessons to help them adjust curricula and instruction. Across classrooms, teachers administer the Degrees of Reading Power (DRP) assessment to measure how well students understand expository texts. ELA and social studies teachers shared that they use student DRP scores to group students into tiers and to make adjustments to instruction and curricula. School leaders also shared that end of unit assessments are used by ELA and math teachers to make adjustments to curricula and instruction. Individual teacher analysis of class performance was observed in the review of school documents however the ways in which this analysis was used to make adjustments was not evident.

- The Hochman Method for writing is used across most sixth, seventh, and eighth grade classrooms, although consistent exposure is mixed across grades. During the observed teacher team meeting this method was used to access student performance on aligned writing tasks, analyze student writing, and discuss next steps. School leaders articulated that looking at student performance across these writing tasks has demonstrated a decrease in student achievement in writing. A review of sixth grade beginning and mid-year assessment data showed some progress for students with low level scores, but stagnant or decreasing scores for other students. Comparative data was not available in grades seven and eight as the mid-year assessment results from January was not shared at the time of the review. A similar writing assessment or common writing assessment is not in place for students in honors classes across the grades, hindering teachers’ ability to measure progress or make adjustments to curricula and instruction for all learners.

- In five of the nine classes visited, teachers used questioning to check for understanding during the lesson, with some adjustment for individual learners. Some of the questioning led to new understanding for individual students in conference with teachers, as they did in the U.S. History Regents Exam class, and in math and science classes. Other adjustments to meet the needs of learners during instruction, such as making on the spot adjustments, were not observed. While success criteria in classes made learning expectations clear for students, teachers were not consistent in their assessment of student learning.

- In four classes visited, along with conferencing, teachers took notes on student learning. Teachers stated that this practice allowed them to use noticings from instruction to inform later lessons. The use of exit tickets was observed in use or planning in two classes, though in one, students were given the exit ticket before independent practice, making it unclear how it would be used to demonstrate student understanding.
**Additional Finding**

| Quality Indicator: | 4.1 Teacher Support and Supervision | Rating: | Developing |

**Findings**

School leaders support the development of teachers, including those new to the profession, with feedback and next steps from frequent cycles of classroom observation; however, the analysis of student work or data is rarely included. Feedback to teachers inconsistently captures strengths, challenges, and next steps, and is not yet fully connected to the Danielson *Framework for Teaching*.

**Impact**

Observation of teachers, though frequent, does not consistently use the Danielson *Framework for Teaching* to articulate clear expectations for teacher practice or analyses learning outcomes to elevate schoolwide instructional practices and promote professional growth and reflection.

**Supporting Evidence**

- Observation records and *Advance* reports demonstrate that teachers are observed frequently by the principal and one of the school’s assistant principals. However, observation records demonstrate inconsistencies in how administrators provide feedback and next steps to teachers and include little analysis of student work or data. The majority of the principal’s feedback to teachers included ratings but few strengths, challenges, and next steps for teachers rated Effective or Highly Effective (the majority of the school’s teachers) and included no references to student work or data. The assistant principal’s feedback to teachers captured low-inference classroom observations, strengths, and clear next steps for all teachers, but little connection to student work or data. Another assistant principal also observes teachers, however none of his observation records were shared during the review. Teachers and administrators also spoke to inconsistencies in post observation feedback. For some teachers, feedback was almost immediate, happening within forty-eight hours; for others, feedback conferences were held within five to seven days.

- Administrator feedback to teachers varied widely with feedback being loosely connected to the Danielson *Framework for Teaching*. When providing teacher feedback on a strength, the principal spoke to a specific instructional strategy and commended the teacher, “Great to see you do a unit readiness pretest to gauge skills.” However, feedback often lacked specificity in what the teacher’s specific strengths were, noting only, “It is clear that you have a nice rapport with students.” The majority of the principal’s ratings did not articulate any next steps for teachers, though one email was provided from a September observation that made clear that the principal and teacher did discuss some next steps. In a few other instances, there were clear next steps provided to a teacher with a Developing rating. The principal was clear in a leadership meeting that if teachers were on track, his feedback was less detailed, or he may not put it in writing. The assistant principal’s observation records demonstrate consistency in articulating clear strengths, challenges, and next steps to all teachers rated, and often connected back to the school’s articulated expectations and usually included tools, such as protocols for use in the classroom.

- The principal shared that the instructional cabinet, including administrators and lead teachers participate in weekly learning walks in pairs to norm verbal feedback to teachers, but that they did not norm written feedback. The feedback cycles, while frequent, are not consistently effective in elevating schoolwide instructional practices.
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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</thead>
</table>

Findings

The majority of teachers are engaged in structured, inquiry-based professional collaborations. Teacher teams consistently analyze assessment data and student work for students they share or whom they are focused on.

Impact

Inquiry promotes the achievement of school goals and the implementation of the Common Core, particularly writing with text-based evidence, and strengthens the instructional capacity of teachers and promotes progress for groups of students.

Supporting Evidence

- The strategic reading team observed and demonstrated an inquiry approach to looking at the Hochman Method, its use during strategic reading, and focused on school goals of aligning instruction to the Common Core, including the instructional shifts. Teachers articulated that their time together on this collaborative inquiry team is strengthening instructional practices across the school, their individual understanding of the use of rubrics in instruction, and the expectations of the Common Core Standards. Teachers shared that as a result of their work, while writing scores are going down, reading scores for students in grades seven and eight are going up as demonstrated in the DRP assessments. A review of *Fall and Winter Degrees of Reading Power* (DRP) assessment data for students in the classes whose teachers were a part of the team observed showed modest gains for some classes, averaging about ten points per class, with some students making dramatic jumps and others decreasing.

- Other content area teacher teams share a common planning period. For example, a teacher on a sixth grade team at a question and answer session shared that the teachers are cohesive in their planning and instruction as a result of their time together as a team, and cited their common planning as “the backbone of our lessons.” This was also demonstrated in several of the lesson plans that were shared, in that lesson plans often followed a similar format, included learning targets and success criteria, and also included similar strategies for differentiation, such as tiered tasks for groups of students. In some math classes, teachers shared a common strategy of grouping students as, “Associates,” “Masters,” or “Ph.D.,” to note differing levels of student mastery toward learning targets.

- Teachers of students with disabilities receiving self-contained services shared that their team allows them to focus on seventh and eighth grade students for whom they share, and their inquiry work revolves around academic and behavior supports for students whilst progressing towards goals. A teacher was able to point to a particular student who could not write a complete sentence in the beginning of the year who also spoke in fragments, and that through their inquiry work, they have seen the student progress to writing and speaking in complete sentences with verbs, and the student being able to describe the sentence pieces.