Quality Review Report

2016-2017

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Bronx
NY 10470

Principal: Timothy Sullivan

Dates of Review:
December 6, 2016 - December 7, 2016

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


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>
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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>Additional Finding</td>
<td>Proficient</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1.2 Develop teacher pedagogy from a coherent set of beliefs about how students learn best that is informed by the instructional shifts and Danielson Framework for Teaching, aligned to the curricula, engaging, and meets the needs of all learners so that all students produce meaningful work products</td>
<td>Additional Finding</td>
<td>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>Area of Celebration</td>
<td>Well Developed</td>
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</table>
### School Culture

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

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Area</th>
<th>Rating</th>
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<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>Additional Finding</td>
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</tbody>
</table>

### Systems for Improvement

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

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<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>Area of Focus</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>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Findings
The vast majority of teachers use and create assessments and rubrics that are aligned to the school’s curriculum that allows for a clear pathway to student mastery. Ongoing checks for understanding and student self-assessment are used throughout all classrooms.

Impact
Actionable and meaningful feedback enables teachers and students to understand student achievement and provides key information to help students be fully aware of their next learning steps.

Supporting Evidence

- The vast majority of teachers create and adjust Common Core-aligned student-friendly rubrics across all grades so that students can use them actively in class. The use of rubrics was evident schoolwide as students used the rubrics to check their own work and peer-assess classmates work. During an eighth-grade writing lesson a student was asked how he used the rubric he had in front of him. The student responded that he uses it to make sure that he is not missing any important information that would cost him points when he eventually hands in his work. He went on to say, “I do this in all my classes.” In first grade, a math rubric is utilized which shows an ice cream cone with either one, two, or three scoops of ice cream so that students are able to determine whether or not they have completed their work accurately. Students were asked how they know which ice cream cone to choose, one student stated that if they have all three of the sentences in the box, they get three scoops, and if they do not have three scoops then they are missing something in their math answer.

- The vast majority of teachers provide students with feedback that is actionable and specific. Students have a clear understanding of what feedback is and how it guides and helps them. Students shared that feedback is used to “help them so that the next time they know what to do better.” Teacher feedback provides students with individualized next steps that are clear and aligned to a rubric that also includes an area where students create a goal for themselves based on the teacher feedback. For example, in a math problem which required an extended response the teacher gave the following feedback, “Great group work! Your group worked so well together! Next time, check your work and add more math vocabulary to your explanation.” Students were able to create a goal in their rubric that read, “Next time we will add more vocab to our explanation.” Additionally, student work displayed in classrooms and in the hallways showed actionable teacher feedback serving to guide students with next steps.

- The vast majority of classes used a color-coded index card system for students to self-assess their learning throughout lessons and share with the teacher when they fully understand something or if they need help, thus allowing teachers’ to check for student understanding. All students have four different color cards, green, orange, yellow, and red. If a student holds up a green card it means they understand the topic and can teach it to someone else. If they hold up an orange card it means they understand it. If they hold up a yellow card it means they understand some things but are still a little confused, and if they hold up a red card it means they don’t understand and need help. Students were seen actively using this system during the majority of classes, and teachers were able to assess and assist students during the class.
Area of Focus

| Quality Indicator: | 3.1 Goals and Action Plans | Rating: | Proficient |

Findings

School goals are implemented and monitored throughout the school year and adjustments are made as needed. Goals and action plans are informed by ongoing data-driven needs assessments.

Impact

Goals and action plans that are tracked for progress are used to drive schoolwide efforts to accelerate student learning, foster student social/emotional growth, and improve teacher practice. However, adjustments made to purposefully minimize the achievement gap for some subgroups of students have yet to be achieved.

Supporting Evidence

- The school has a clear focus and has set goals for English Language Arts (ELA), teachers in the form of targeted instructional strategies that look to improve the school's grade eight ELA scores by three percent. This goal and relevant strategies are detailed in the school's Comprehensive Educational Plan (CEP), and reflected in teacher observation and evaluation write-ups. Goals are discussed regularly during pre- and post-observation meetings and teachers are reminded to always include aspects of the goals in their planning. These and all other goals and action plans are tracked regularly by administration.

- Throughout the school year, leadership gathers data from surveys and teacher team meetings to help track and develop professional development (PD) sessions. During the school year, teacher inquiry teams meet to review and analyze data, best practices, and areas in which they feel they need support. School leadership and staff work together to identify resources that can be offered to staff and plan all professional learning opportunities using data the teachers provide. As a result, a formal professional learning cycle has been instituted that gives teachers opportunities to attend professional learning sessions geared towards their needs and the needs of their students. Teachers discussed how this has impacted teacher practice; however, there is uneven evidence that correlates to the implementation of professional learnings to close the achievement gap, specifically for English as a New Language (ENL) students.

- Goals for the school’s Positive Behavioral Interventions and Supports (PBIS) program are established in the school’s CEP. Desired student behaviors are clearly articulated in every classroom visited and on bulletin boards throughout the building. The acronym P.A.W.S. (positive attitude, always respectful, work together, safety first) is followed and shared by parents, teachers and students. In addition, “Bulldog Bucks” for the middle school students was a student created system that allows students to win “bucks” that can be redeemed at the student-run school store. This is a system that supports positive behaviors and according to teachers is motivating and impactful.
Findings
School curricula is aligned to the Common Core Learning Standards and the instructional shifts. Additionally, rigor and higher-order thinking skills are emphasized throughout the school's curricula.

Impact
Academic tasks exhibit rigor and higher-order skills that promote college and career readiness for all students.

Supporting Evidence

- Lesson plans reviewed are aligned to the Common Core Learning Standards. A grade two-math lesson displayed planning for which students had to solve word problems and be able to fluently add and subtract within 100 using strategies based on place value. A grade five English Language Arts (ELA) lesson plan included drawing inferences from a text, determining two or more main ideas, and determining the meaning of generic academic and domain-specific words and phrases in relevant texts.

- Evidence of the pedagogical shifts demanded by the Common Core Standards was present throughout lessons and unit plans reviewed. An eighth grade ELA lesson plan, had students citing textual evidence. Plans called for students to be separated into predetermined groups and asked them to share their findings based on the poems they read. Additionally, students were asked how group exploration helps them come to a deeper understanding of the poem. A grade one math lesson plan required students use actively appropriate academic vocabulary that would lead to a deeper understanding of the math concepts discussed in class. It further noted that students would use manipulatives to show their understanding for the term difference and how it relates to subtraction.

- Unit plans reviewed displayed higher-order thinking skills and rigorous tasks. A grade six ELA unit plan has students construct short response writing tasks. It also included discussion-based questions (DBQ) activities with extended writing tasks connected to the DBQs. Grade two math unit plans incorporate learning objectives such as: using compensation to develop flexible thinking for two-digit addition, rewriting horizontal addition problems vertically in the standard algorithm format, and finding differences on a number line to develop the mental strategy of decomposing to simplify facts.
Additional Finding

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

Teacher pedagogical practices are aligned to the curricula and reflect the school's belief about how students learn best. In addition, teachers use questioning strategies, scaffolds, and multiple entry points so that all learners are challenged.

Impact

Pedagogical practices incorporated throughout the school result in students producing meaningful work products.

Supporting Evidence

- There is a belief that students learn best when they are an active part of their own learning. Thus, teachers work in partnership with students and check to see that they can explain their learning throughout lessons, and students are given opportunities to share their learning with their classmates. In a kindergarten science class, the teacher presented the question “What is a seed?” Student responses included; “Something that makes plants grow,” and “They make trees grow.” Additionally, students shared how fruits and vegetables have seeds and that pinecones have seeds as well. Students were also able to express their learning by drawing and composing sentences. One student drew a picture of a tree and constructed the sentence, “Trunks hold up branches.” Students were then able to explore and investigate various examples of items that have seeds, or at one time were a seed such as pinecones, acorns, and tree leaves.

- During a grade five writing lesson, the objective was for students to identify the main idea and key details in a non-fiction article. The teacher first modeled how to find the main idea and supporting details using an excerpt from the book, *The True Book of Explorers from North America*. Students were then separated into three predetermined groups based on lexile levels and each group given an article on the dangers of hover boards. Groups were given graphic organizers to show evidence of their work, and iPads for further research on the topic. One student reported that the main idea of the article they read was to “inform people about the dangers of the hover board.” Similarly, another student stated that the main idea was to “warn people before they use or buy a hover board.”

- A grade three-math lesson had students complete a math word problem in which they had to show a deep understanding of the process and academic math vocabulary. Students first read the word problem underlining key terms such as “how many” and “for all,” and also underlining numerical values. The worksheet had students break down their work into the following four boxes: understand read it, make a plan think it, solve and check, and explain by speaking and writing. Students completed their work by sharing their knowledge of the word problem stating, “Mrs. Gomez has 67 students in her class only 10 of her students can fit in each table.” Students expressed their problem solving skills by writing “I will use the model strategy because I need to fit 10 of her students at each table.” Students then displayed their math calculations and checked their work. Lastly, students were able to share their work by stating and writing, “first I read the problem and understand it, next I choose my strategy, and finally I solved the problem.”
### Additional Finding

<table>
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<th>Quality Indicator:</th>
<th>3.4 High Expectations</th>
<th>Rating:</th>
<th>Proficient</th>
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**Findings**

The school consistently communicates high expectations around student progress to the community. Administration communicates all elements of the Danielson *Framework for Teaching* to staff and provides professional learning as a means of support.

**Impact**

Structures that support the school's high expectations of staff, students, and families, are ensuring a clear path to student achievement and college and career readiness.

**Supporting Evidence**

- School leadership dedicates a professional development (PD) session at the start of the school year to unpacking the staff handbook as a way familiarize staff with the expectations and procedures for the upcoming school year. During the conversations with teachers, they shared that "expectations are communicated as early as the first day of school." Teachers also went on to say that there should be no staff member in the school that can say they are not aware of “what is expected of them."

- School leadership and teachers communicate with families through a variety of ways. Progress reports are distributed twice a year for elementary school students and three times a year for all middle school students. In addition, all students are given student planners at the start of the school year with the expectation that the planners are used as a way to keep track of assignments and as a place where parents can sign off on student exams or classwork assignments. Additionally, time after school every Tuesday is dedicated to teacher and family interactions. Parents have opportunities to come to the school and meet with teachers to discuss their child or attend a parent workshop in a particular area or subject. Teachers also use emails, class newsletters, class websites and applications such as ClassDojo, as a means to further communicate with parents. During a meeting with parents all parents expressed their satisfaction with how open the lines of communication are with the school. One parent shared "I never feel as if I am missing out on anything at the school, they always keep me informed as to everything that is going on in the school and with my child."

- Leadership holds teachers accountable for meeting expectations through a variety of ways. Instructional expectations are monitored and evaluated through a series of teacher observation cycles throughout the school year. Each administrator in the school is responsible for a subject and grade. Through the observation process, school leadership ensures that curriculum and instruction, along with pedagogical practices, are aligned to the Common Core Learning Standards and the Danielson *Framework for Teaching*. An observation report offered the teacher next steps that included creating a station or folder for the top third of the class that supplies them with more choice and further challenging those students. The administrator ended the report by asking the teacher to bring to the next collaboration meeting samples of what the teacher developed as a result of the feedback offered.
### Additional Finding

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<tr>
<th>Quality Indicator:</th>
<th>4.2 Teacher Teams &amp; Leadership Development</th>
<th>Rating:</th>
<th>Well Developed</th>
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#### Findings

The vast majority of teachers is involved in structured inquiry-based collaborations that support school goals and allows for systematically analyzing assessment data, student work, and teacher practice.

#### Impact

As a result of teacher collaboration, there are improvements in teacher practice and increased student achievement for all learners.

#### Supporting Evidence

- Strategically created teachers schedules allow for common preparation times multiple times per week, which engage grade and curriculum teams in collaborative-inquiry based sessions. During these meetings, teams review student data, plan and revise lessons, and share best practices. 
  Staff review and analyze data from multiple sources such as Fountas and Pinnel (F&P) reading levels, unit tests, and formal and informal assessments, which teachers then use to help inform and adjust their instruction as needed. Additionally, teachers have multiple opportunities to share best practices with fellow colleagues. During a teacher meeting, teachers related how valuable they felt sharing best practices is and the impact it has had on them and their classes. One teacher stated, “We find the strengths in our colleagues and this allows us to get strong in those same areas.” Teachers shared the example of questions strategies, and how “picking the brain” of a teacher with strong questioning strategies only improves this aspect of their pedagogy.

- Teachers meet regularly across grades and subjects and use established procedures and protocols to analyze student work. During a grade two team meeting, teachers met to discuss and analyze student work samples, one each for grade six, seven, and eight, and used a protocol to time and document the process and outcomes of the meeting. After reviewing student work, teachers shared their thoughts on how to improve the writing level of the students. Teachers shared their likes, such as, “one thing that I like about this student’s beginning section is his variety of details.” Teachers also expressed that there were missing a deeper analysis from the student’s central idea. Teachers suggested using a short response checklist that is used by a colleague, and another teacher suggested possibly taking a graphic organizer so that the student would have to fill in each piece of a structured response in order for the student to get more practice.

- Teachers are engaged in professional development on a weekly basis. When teachers attend professional development off campus, they are expected to turnkey their learning during team and grade meetings. Teachers use grade level meetings as a way to discuss and make decisions for schoolwide initiatives. Those recommendations are then proposed to school leadership. For example, teacher teams felt that the reading program that was used in the previous year did not support children in their reading and therefore recommended a switch to a new program that was adopted and implemented this year. Additionally, teacher schedule intervisitations with one and another where they exchange materials and offer feedback strategies. As a result, teachers’ instructional capacity is strengthened and students are receiving instruction that has been reinforced by several teachers.