Quality Review Report

2016-2017

Thomas C. Giordano Middle School 45
Junior High-Intermediate-Middle 10X045

2502 Lorillard Pl.
Bronx
NY 10458

Principal: Annamaria Perrotta

Dates of Review:
January 10, 2017 - January 11, 2017

Lead Reviewer: Roxan Marks
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

Thomas C. Giordano Middle School 45 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>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>To what extent does the school...</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1.1 Ensure engaging, rigorous, and coherent curricula in all subjects, accessible for a variety of learners and aligned to Common Core Learning Standards and/or content standards</td>
<td>Additional Finding</td>
<td>Proficient</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1.2 Develop teacher pedagogy from a coherent set of beliefs about how students learn best that is informed by the instructional shifts and Danielson Framework for Teaching, aligned to the curricula, engaging, and meets the needs of all learners so that all students produce meaningful work products</td>
<td>Area of Focus</td>
<td>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 Quality Ratings continued

#### School Culture

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

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Area</th>
<th>Rating</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1.4 Maintain a culture of mutual trust and positive attitudes that supports the academic and personal growth of students and adults</td>
<td>Additional Finding</td>
</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>
</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>Area of Celebration</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>
Area of Celebration

| Quality Indicator: | 1.3 Leveraging Resources | Rating: | Proficient |

Findings

The use of resources and partnerships support the school goals. Teacher assignments, student groupings, and interventions are coordinated, especially for students with disabilities and English Language Learners (ELLs).

Impact

Effective supports provide access to learning opportunities that lead to college and career readiness and are evident in meaningful student work products.

Supporting Evidence

- This is the fourth year of implementing a 21st Century grant, iPad carts, and the integration of technology during instruction allows students to use these tools to advance their learning. Student work products seen were generated using technology and research completed using media literacy skills. Virtual labs also engage students in purposeful tasks in groups using technology. Teachers are implementing Positive Behavior Intervention System (PBIS) and resource allocation supports an additional part-time dean that works alongside the two existing deans, results in students developing personal responsibilities, life skills, and learning to work collaboratively with peers. Partnership with Literacy Design Collaborative (LDCi3) fosters collaboration among teachers through professional learning communities. This partnership provides training for teachers of English Language Learners (ELLs) by providing them with tools to look deeply at student work, creating mini-tasks, and sharing learned strategies with colleagues. Student work products reflected critical thinking and problem solving that engaged learners in making real-world connections.

- To support the goal of implementing a system of positive intervention supports, school leaders coordinate services with partnerships to help students. Teachers shared that their partnership with Turnaround for Children coupled with targeted plans and interventions for students, support culture building in classes, and develop social-emotional skills in students. Staff utilizes three-tiered intervention strategies, which includes classroom supports, dialogue through a Kid Talk structure, and Pupil Personnel Team. Personal plans and section sheets support the unique needs of students and specific strategies to support the learner and increase instructional access into learning. Action planning for student improvement includes teachers directly responsible for identified students and a case manager who coordinates services and interventions. Targeted behaviors are identified, goals are established, and various strategies are tried and tracked by the team. As a result, more students have access to learning during lessons.

- Organizational decisions support the goals of increasing student achievement on state assessment for English Language Learners and students with disabilities. Teachers shared that during small group instruction they work with target groups on guided reading strategies, reciprocal teaching, and virtual labs. Partnership with GEAR UP, an organization that supports increased student college attendance and success, focuses on guidance and advisement, skill building, and college planning and readiness. Teachers have identified groups of students based on state assessment data and provide additional small group instruction to address areas in need of improvement. As a result, students are provided with multiple scholarly tools during small group that supports access.
Findings

Across classrooms, instructional strategies inconsistently offer multiple entry points and scaffolds into the curricula as evidenced by students’ work products and discussions.

Impact

Across classrooms, although instructional practices place students into groups, questioning, discourse, and scaffolds are not consistently implemented, thus limiting high levels of thinking demonstrated in student work products, engagement, and participation for all students including ELLs and students with disabilities.

Supporting Evidence

- Across classrooms, students were working in groups on various tiered tasks. In a grade six class for ELLs, students were working in stations or groups to understand different weather events. One group was working on tornadoes, a group was tasked with annotating two texts, and another group used weather pictures to engage in discussion about the photographs. The group consisting of recent speakers of English had pictures of weather they were matching to related word cards. Although the activity was differentiated, it was not rigorous nor did the students have access to their own native language as a support. In a class for students with disabilities, students were analyzing main ideas and supporting details using different media and formats. Although planned group work was differentiated, not all students engaged with the task nor had adequate access provided to meet their needs. For example, a group of four students was responsible to look at the evidence and capture responses on chart paper. Yet, one student had no required text, one was still copying the learning target, another did not contribute, and one tried to record responses on the chart paper.

- The school is developing standards and structures to promote discussions among students. The prior school year, teachers developed a discussion rubric, which was observed in classrooms with accountable talk prompts to support talk. In a grade seven math lesson, students were engaged in group work analyzing proportional relationships in a real-world application. Although students discussed the work, they did not challenge each other or ask peers high-level questions, as was the requirement of the task. However, in a social studies lesson, the room buzzed with voices as students were engaged in group activities around early colonial America. In this class, discussion was at a high level and students were actively talking about what they saw, inferred, and wondered about regarding the various topics about colonial America.

- Across classes, discussions primarily centered on the questions posed by teachers and did not spark conversations or additional questions among or by students. In a grade eight classroom, the teacher accepted one- and two-word responses from students, without pushing for explanations, as is a schoolwide expectation. In another class, just as students were beginning to have conversation about their independent reading text, the teacher signals to them not to talk although they were tasked to do so with the same guiding questions, where not all students had ample time to complete the task. Additionally, in another class students were asked to respond to their independent reading text using an independent reading sheet. A few students shared orally how the character and setting affected the plot, yet the written response only provided a small space for students to respond, preventing students from fully expressing their thinking on paper.
Additional Finding

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

School leaders and staff ensure curricula are aligned to the Common Core Learning Standards and include focus on the instructional shifts and make purposeful decisions. Academic tasks consistently emphasize higher-order thinking skills.

Impact

Staff decisions about curricula build coherence across the grades and topics covered and promote college and career readiness and rigorous tasks for a variety of learners.

Supporting Evidence

- Teachers implement Expeditionary Learning for English Language Arts (ELA) and Connected Math Project 3 (CMP3) supports math instruction. Staff supplements these with resources from EngageNY. For content area instruction, New York City Scope and Sequence is used to plan science and social studies instruction. ELA writing curricula documents provide long-term goals and outline monthly topics for writing across grades. Recent arrivals to the country are provided instruction using a beginning English as a New Language curricula aligned to language standards. These plans include interdisciplinary connections, targeted vocabulary, and real-world tasks. Unit plans provide real-world projects such as designing a floor plan for a dream home, create an advertisement, and plan a garden for the home. Teachers stated that by making real-world connections, having students working collaboratively, and engaging in critical-thinking activities are ways to build college readiness.

- As a Middle School Quality Initiative (MSQI) school, teachers implement the comprehensive and coherent literacy framework that includes, reading workshop, using and modifying the mini-lessons, as well as prompts aligned to Common Core Learning Standards. For example, a grade six Challenging Reader Responses has a list of key standards with questions at varying levels of cognitive challenge used during reading instruction. Reader’s response prompts for journal writing across the grades are planned to engage students and build writing stamina.

- Webb’s Depth of Knowledge (DOK) is used by teachers to ensure that higher-order thinking is integrated in lessons across grades and subjects. Teachers collaborate to adjust lessons and create group tasks to ensure rigor and access is embedded. A grade eight lesson plan document included standards for science and ELA, student-friendly objectives, detail planning for groups, focus questions, differentiation, and assessments. An Integrated Co-teaching (ICT) lesson plan contained similar components and showed planning for six groups based on reading levels.
Additional Finding

Quality Indicator: 2.2 Assessment
Rating: Developing

Findings

School leaders and staff are developing structures to use data to effectively measure student progress toward goals through common assessments, across grades and subjects. Teachers’ assessment practices inconsistently reflect the use of ongoing checks for understanding and student self-assessment.

Impact

The limitations of using data to evaluate curricular and instructional decisions across the school restrict the effectiveness of school leaders and teachers to meet students’ learning needs.

Supporting Evidence

- Teachers conduct baseline assessments in English Language Arts and submit a class profile sheet listing at least one area to focus on, such as paragraph structure, run-on sentences, answer the prompt, or conventions. Patterns and trends across classes or grades are not consistently analyzed nor used to make curricular adjustments. Reading-level data for Degrees of Reading Power assessment was analyzed and a graph created to show the percent of students falling within each quartile by grade level. Deeper analysis of this data was not provided and so there was no additional information regarding the progress of subgroups and classes across the school. Additionally, identification of specific areas needed to increase proficiency or to adjust curricula and instruction were not evident.

- School leaders and teachers shared that they use strategies, thumbs up, entry and exit slips, and conference notes to check for understanding. In an eighth-grade science classroom, students were working in stations to explore the different ways that genetic conditions can be inherited. The teacher circulated among the groups and realized there was some confusion in student understanding. So, the teacher called the group together to make an adjustment. However, this was not the practice seen across most rooms. In a sixth grade class, a group towards the back of the room were provided with weather pictures and charged with having a discussion. This was a challenge for them, as evidenced by their lack of completed work. In another classroom, the teacher did not adjust to meet the emerging needs of a group of students in the back of the room as they were having challenges completing the task. One teacher asked students to raise their hands and counted fourteen hands as a check for understanding, but made no adjustment. Across most classes, teachers did not assess individual student understanding either in writing or through questioning.

- In September, teachers used the New York State assessment data provided in the June Instructional Reports to identify three standards that students showed mastery and three standards that were represented the lowest percentage proficient. One comparison looked at the prior year percentage of mastery by standards including listing the standards that had the greatest growth and the ones that posed the most challenges for most students. Based on the analysis of New York State assessment data, teams decided the focus standards for the year. Decisions were made by each team to focus on two key standards. There was little to no evidence that teachers track and monitor these focus standards or adjust curricula or pedagogical plans based on data gathered from common assessments.
Findings
High expectations are consistently communicated to staff to provide support for the Danielson Framework for Teaching. Teachers have established a culture for learning through ongoing communication of high expectations for all students.

Impact
Administration provides training and has a system of accountability for their high expectations. There is a culture in the school that provides targeted and ongoing supports and guidance to ensure students are prepared for the next level of learning.

Supporting Evidence

- The staff handbook delineates administrative expectations through policies ranging from professionalism, administrative responsibilities, to classroom expectations. The principal distributes the school newsletter called Increase the Awesome, which give compliments staff for good practices seen across the school. A team of teachers created a manual for new teachers outlining basic concerns and questions that can assist new teachers in understanding the new learning community. School leaders communicate high expectations with teachers, for example, an ELA News document provided instructional focus on assessments, portfolio, and expectations for the use of checking for understanding strategies, notebook checklists, and other materials to support school beliefs. Another document outlines the ten things that should be evident in all classrooms including conferencing, station work, learning targets visible, and use of technology seen across the school. Training is provided to teachers to support these expectations and aligned to using questioning and discussion techniques, engaging students in learning, and using assessment in instruction.

- School leaders ensure accountability to these expectations through a cycle to frequent observations and professional development supports toward the goals tied to the Danielson Framework for Teaching. Supports are provided to teachers through reports that provide actionable feedback and guide teachers to videos, peer visits, and training opportunities. Communication is provided to teachers regarding the teacher’s availability for the month to support school wide instructional expectations. For example, list includes various subject area teachers modeling the reading workshop, community building, and supporting ELLs. Schoolwide Interclass Visitation Logs are used to capture inter-visitations data including low inference notes, implications for classroom practice and question that linger. Administration and professional learning team uses this data to inform planning of additional professional learning opportunities.

- The student handbook provides guidance for academic and behavioral expectations to help student prepare for college and careers. Partnership with College Access Initiative supports academic advisement, mentoring, workshop for families, and college planning assistance. Club Amigas, mentoring for girls, helps with college preparedness. The transition coordinator works with grade eight students including visits to high schools. Parent shared workshops on new standards, high school choice process, and college readiness helps them to better understand the expectations and help get their children ready for college. Students shared that guest speakers and discussions about college life, help with the application process are ways they are getting college ready. Another student shared that student-led conferences has developed independence and led to also becoming reflective.
Additional Finding

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Quality Indicator:</th>
<th>4.2 Teacher Teams and Leadership Development</th>
<th>Rating:</th>
<th>Proficient</th>
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</table>

Findings
The majority of teachers participate in professional learning communities (PLCs). Distributive structures are in place.

Impact
Through team collaborations, teachers’ instructional capacity is strengthened as they promote the achievement of the school goals and the Common Core. Teachers have a voice in decisions that impact student learning.

Supporting Evidence

- Professional learning time allows teachers to work in subject area teams, using a looking at student work protocol. Teams look at student work, identify trends, create interventions, and plan lessons. During teacher team observation, teachers of ELLs who participate in Literacy Design Collaborative use an argument rubric with elements of focus, controlling ideas, reading and research, development, and organization to review student work products. They discussed the score assigned to students, reasons for the rubric-based rating, and how the use of sentence starters could support a student. For example, teachers stated that the professional development focused on learning stations helped them with creating and managing differentiated groups in classes. Additionally, teachers stated that the support of partnerships has created a culture of collaboration and fostering trust that allows for inter visitations. Notes from teacher meetings show ongoing learning during PLCs to deepen their understanding of assessment practices, analysis of student work products, and planning of instruction using common strategies.

- School leaders shared that staff had input in the selection and implementation of Positive Behavior Incentive System (PBIS), whereby a survey was shared and analysis was used to guide implementation. Teams participate in professional development that is provided by their peers, school leaders, and consultants. Teachers stated that professional learning is planned based on teacher feedback and a team develops professional learning plans with school leaders. Staff describes an open-door policy, which allows for dialogue and sharing of ideas. Teachers take ownership of tasks including programming, managing PBIS, and conducting professional development for colleagues and parents. Teacher teams make decisions regarding assessments and shared they have input in creating goals for the schools and had a voice in refining school wide belief statements.

- Artifacts from the ELL teacher team show they review the rubric used for assessing student work and identify the standard aligned to the task. They assessed and sorted the work by levels and at another session, they began to list all students by levels including strengths, areas of growth, and intervention. Teachers then implemented the strategies and returned to the team to assess the successes or challenges of lessons. They also looked at the current unit of study to determine which lessons the application and practice of the new strategy would best fit. At the final session for the cycle, they reviewed the new work products and identified those students who require a different intervention. Similarly, the math team has explored alignment and rigor of tasks, analysis of student work to identify areas of strength and needs, to plan methods to scaffold tasks for students. They engage in learning to help develop Common Core-aligned tasks, analyzing tasks to determine the level of rigor and planning for instruction.