Quality Review Report

2016-2017

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Elementary 11X078
1400 Needham Ave.
Bronx
NY 10469

Principal: Claudina Skerritt

Dates of Review:
February 28, 2017 - March 1, 2017

Lead Reviewer: Daisy Concepcion
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>
</tr>
</thead>
<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>Additional Finding</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>Area of Focus</td>
<td>Developing</td>
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</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>
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</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>
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</tbody>
</table>
Area of Celebration

<table>
<thead>
<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 for professionalism, instruction, and other elements of the Danielson *Framework for Teaching* to all staff members. School leaders and staff consistently communicate expectations that are connected to a path to college and career readiness.

**Impact**
School leaders hold staff accountable to the high expectations communicated. Families are offered workshops and communications through ongoing feedback about student achievement towards those expectations.

**Supporting Evidence**

- School leaders communicate high expectations through memorandums, staff handbook, emails, newsletters, and the school’s professional development sessions called Marvelous Mondays. During these sessions, school leaders communicate high expectations to teachers about student engagement, the use of differentiation, and the various school social and emotional programs. School leaders have tiered professional development sessions, so that all staff members have an opportunity to grow and raise to the expectations. The school has worked extensively on revising curriculum maps, unit and lesson plans to include explicit modeling, and a focus on incorporating, “I can” statements. An email to the staff from the principal states, “that the key to student success and school improvement is meaningful and thoughtful planning.” A review of the Danielson *Framework for Teaching* observations reflect feedback to teachers such as, “Look closely at your lesson objectives and ensure that the student outcome is aligned with the lesson activity. Lesson objectives should be crafted using the ‘I can’ statements demonstrating accountability for high expectations.”

- Parents stated that the school has specialty programs that provide them with an opportunity to learn about the school curriculum from “Take your Dads to School Day,” to curriculum night, family literacy nights, and more recently, a workshop with focusing on the school’s instructional focus about evidence-based responses. Parents stated that they became familiar with this instructional shift through a workshop on the *Giving Tree*. This workshop resonated with parents who stated that they were touched by the book, because of engaging in book talks. They now had a better understanding of text-based evidence and how to identify themes. Parents stated school leaders also have award ceremonies, which celebrate student achievement and allow parents to understand student progress.

- In a meeting with parents, they shared that school leaders and staff communicate their high expectations with them, on topics such as reading, writing, attendance, and math strategies through a monthly PS 78 parent newsletter. Monthly calendars and weekly reminders keep parents, students, and teachers informed of school events and activities. Parents stated that various newsletters provide them with information and high expectations for all school members, such as the teacher newsletter called *78 Hutch Express* and the student council newsletter called *Channel 78*. Additionally, school leaders survey parents on workshops and provide monthly grade specific family engagement sessions designed to address areas of need on each grade. Parents also stated that the school has several online gradebooks that allow them to follow student achievement, as well as progress reports in between report cards. Parents use the Tuesday parent engagement to follow up with teachers on any concern that they have about student grades or performance. Parents also spoke about general and individual meetings that inform them of middle school articulation, as well as a college and career awareness day.
Area of Focus

**Quality Indicator:** 2.2 Assessments
**Rating:** Developing

**Findings**
Across classrooms, teachers use some rubrics that are loosely aligned with the school curriculum. Teachers' assessment practices inconsistently reflect the use of ongoing checks for understanding.

**Impact**
Since some of the rubrics are loosely aligned to the school curriculum, those that are aligned do not always result in rubric-based feedback or even limiting feedback to students. Inconsistent checks for understanding hinder teachers from making effective adjustments to meet student needs.

**Supporting Evidence**

- Teachers use a variety of rubrics and checklists across contents and grades with some rubrics being aligned to the curriculum and others only loosely aligned. Regardless of whether the rubrics are aligned to the curriculum or not, the feedback does not consistently use the language of the rubric and in many cases, the rubric or checklist stapled to the students' work is completely blank. Much of the feedback focuses on grammatical or spelling errors. For example, such as in a book report on the rainforest, the teacher praised the student on his selection of beautiful pictures to attract the reader. The next step was "to pay closer attention to conventions and details." Feedback, such as this, is limited since it does not explicitly provide the student with a way to improve the quality of his/her work. In any subject, the feedback is not always actionable.

- In many cases, there are only corrections in red pen, a series of highlight criterion on a rubric, or the feedback is only on what the student could demonstrate with no actionable next step. Regardless of what manner, they only provide limited feedback to students. In a meeting with students about their work products, students stated that they did not consistently find that teacher feedback was helpful or moved them to their next instructional step or improving work products. Much of the work that they brought with them did not have rubrics. Students stated that teacher feedback focused on being supportive. Most of the students could not provide a next step provided by a teacher in any subject area.

- One of the school's foci is, "checks for understandings," along with the school's other agreed practices, such as "Hand Signals," "One Minute Essay," "Think-Pair-Share," "Convince Me," "Questioning," "Retelling," "Observation." These practices, and others like the use of red, green, and yellow cards on a ring to signify understanding, were observed infrequently across classrooms. Turn and talks were observed, but teachers were not gathering evidence from these conversations, so on the moment adjustments were not made. Thumbs up and down results in agreement, but these self-reported assessments are not a measure of true understanding. Furthermore, they do not allow access to where in the thinking the loss of comprehension is happening. A review of teacher notes during an assessment, demonstrates a wide variety of approaches from a detailed teacher sheet on a math chapter, listing the use of a common denominator, to ordering fractions and finding equivalent fractions with the students' names on it. Also, there is a check under the columns for a simple two column sheet that said, "Got it" and "Re-teach" with no criterion listed. A review of lesson plans shows that many of the checks that occur ask for agreement because there was no pre-planned check point to address a standard, a concept, or a procedure. As a result, lessons continue without any adjustments made to meet student needs.
Additional Finding

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

School leaders and faculty have blended curriculum to ensure that curricula are aligned to Common Core Learning Standards and integrate the instructional shifts and have tasks that emphasize rigorous habits.

Impact

School leaders, along with the curriculum team, have made purposeful decisions to build coherence and promote college and career readiness. Academic tasks consistently demand rigorous thinking for all students.

Supporting Evidence

- School leaders created a curriculum map team towards building coherence across grades and subjects. This team developed a school template that includes attention to the unit vocabulary, key questions, and strategies. These features were observed in several of the unit maps, such as a grade four English Language Arts (ELA) reading unit that identified the words generous, ditch, and banquet, and a grade three math unit focusing on the words divisor, quotient, and inverse operations. A grade three ELA unit focuses on domain specific vocabulary, such as archipelago, monsoon, and dynasty. Both the ELA and social studies units highlight the practice of close reading, directing teachers to specific areas in a text, and to model a think-aloud and ask students to annotate and make connections with the text. All subjects engage students in the school’s instructional focus of citing text-based evidence. In one unit, students are directed to examine vocabulary in context by identifying what is an “abolitionist” through inferencing and using text-based evidence to support their ideas. These practices all reflect the school’s focus on integrating the instructional shifts.

- A review of curriculum maps across grades and subjects demonstrates that the maps are aligned to the Common Core Learning Standards, again, using, “I can” statements which cite the standards in student friendly language and the skill or strategy being used to demonstrate mastery of the standard. The “I can” statement for a grade five literary unit shows the statement as, “I can determine them based on evidence in the text and by analyzing how the characters respond to challenges in the story.” A grade three math lesson displayed the “I can” statement as, “I can use repeated subtraction and a number line to relate subtraction to division.” A grade three social studies unit shows “I can” name some of Asia’s geographical features and in a grade five science unit the “I can statement” was, “I can describe renewable, non-renewable, and an inexhaustible energy resource.” These, “I can” statements all reflect the grade appropriate content and grade level standards.

- Academic and tasks consistently become higher-order thinking for all students. By incorporating a range of questions across the Depth of Knowledge (DOK) continuum and through differentiation, all students can access the tasks. A grade three unit on division asks students a series of questions such as, “What strategies can you use to divide by 9?” Then goes on to ask, “Why are there rules, such as, the order of operations?” In these units, students have access to math video manipulatives, such as array blocks. In a grade four reading unit, from the Birchbark House, students made judgements on a character’s actions that began with a question, “Did Omakayas do the right thing with the bears?” Before moving on to a better question, “What can you infer about Omakayas?” Student supports include partner work, organizers, additional short passages, and vocabulary work to create access to the tasks. In a grade five science unit, students consider the relationship between electricity and magnetism and how these affect the world. Students use video, maps, organizers, and an interactive science notebook to complete the tasks.
Additional Finding

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<th>Quality Indicator:</th>
<th>1.2 Pedagogy</th>
<th>Rating:</th>
<th>Developing</th>
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Findings

Across classrooms teaching practices are becoming aligned to the curricula and a set of beliefs about how students learn best and the Danielson Framework for Teaching. Teaching strategies, including questioning and scaffolds, inconsistently provide entry points into the curriculum.

Impact

The school belief of students being engaged in the instructional shifts is developing across classrooms but hindered by the fact that students do not always engage with the text. The inconsistent use of entry points or inappropriate entry points, lead to uneven demonstrations of higher-order thinking.

Supporting Evidence

- In one grade five social studies lesson, the teacher used a series of higher-order thinking questions such as, “What do we know about how they were treated? How did the Buffalo soldiers respond? What theme can be applied to this story?” When engaging students in a text based conversation about the treatment of black soldiers called Buffalo soldiers in the war, with the Choctaw Indians in Oklahoma, she asked the students to support their ideas using evidence from the texts. She then gave students the choice to write a make an inference from the text or apply the theme to their lives. At two tables, students stated that this story was about segregation and connected it to the present-day violence and hate crimes. However, in a grade four class, the teacher did not evidence the same rigor, as students were provided with two simple sentences to read and asked to select a character trait from a chart provided to them. In several instances, the character trait needed was not listed in the provided chart.

- In a grade four science class, students were partnered and used their class notes and classroom charts to have a conversation on renewable and non-renewable energy. Students used academic language such as “generator,” “turbine,” and “transfer of energy.” Students used a map of the United States to make recommendations for the kind of energy stations that should exist in different states to capitalize on the weather. Students suggested solar panels in Florida and wind mills in New Mexico due to large open spaces. Students debated if it were possible to have both types of energy at one location. This type of exchange was not observed in a first grade English class studying schools in Australia. The teacher talked while students sat on the rug. She asked a few students to stand up and wait their turn to add to the chart she was creating. She called on one student at a time, while all other children waited unengaged sitting or standing. There was no differentiation, very limited participation, and no higher-order thinking in this class.

- The school’s belief of evidence-based responses using close reading, open ended questions, and text annotations is developing as it was only seen in a few classes. The skills aligned to the school’s belief involve students reading from a text and using it to demonstrate another school belief which is turn and talk and class discussions. Across many classrooms, students talked about a text, but were not afforded the opportunity to interact with the text. One consistent entry point used by the school is “acting things out.” This entry point hinders student engagement in the instructional shifts and precludes higher order thinking. In a grade five lesson on the post-Civil War Reconstruction period, the teacher wanted students to engage in the instructional shift of academic vocabulary and how the author used precise words to create meaning. While the teacher provided students with the vocabulary words both separately and in context, she did not ask the students to use context clues to figure out the meaning or look at the author’s craft, rather students were told to “act it out.” This not only presented a challenge to students, since the words included were “contradict” and “cultivate,” but did not allow students, including English Language Learners, to define their meaning or use text-based evidence to support their answers.
## Additional Finding

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

### Findings

School leaders provide teachers with feedback that accurately captures their strengths, challenges, and next steps using the Danielson Framework for Teaching and use this teacher observation data to design professional development to support teachers.

### Impact

School leaders’ feedback supports teacher development by providing clear expectations for teacher practice and using this feedback to facilitate professional development and make informed decisions about assignment and succession plans.

### Supporting Evidence

- Feedback to teachers accurately captures strengths, challenges, and next steps and consistently focuses on the school’s instructional focus of student engagement. One observation states, “You provided opportunities for turn and talks and encouraged students to explain their thinking. However, you should work on allowing students to build on each other’s responses without ongoing mediation.” This is followed with an agreed upon next step to “encourage students’ ownership,” “use of accountable talk prompts,” and a date to “monitor progress.” In another observation, the school leader praises the teacher for providing students with feedback that makes clear each student’s strengths and challenges. The school leader goes on to say, that had the teacher given students the criteria (rubric/checklist) at the start of the lesson, students would have been able to generate feedback to themselves and their peers. The school leader asks the teacher to review video clips from the Danielson Framework for Teaching library and to be prepared to discuss these observations and notes at their next meeting. This quality of feedback was seen in all observations, regardless of the school leader providing the feedback.

- School leaders reviewed all their end of year observations and as a result saw a trend related to student engagement and the use of assessment in lessons. A review of the professional development plan reveals that teachers participated in tiered training on these school identified foci. All teachers also had training on the school instructional focus of having students use evidence based responses to support their discussions and their essay writing. Additionally, school leaders provide teachers with one-on-one professional development resources. In one observation, the school leader asked the teacher to, “Write a detailed lesson to utilize the Scaffolding Strategies Handbook” and the “Preview and Review Vocabulary Routine procedure on page 336.”

- One of the current assistant principals at the school demonstrated strong pedagogical practices at the school as a teacher and was promoted to coach to support teachers. Because of strong practices with colleagues, she was promoted to the assistant principal position. Teacher leaders, inquiry leaders, and teachers, who applied to be members of the school curriculum planning, were all rated effective or highly effective in instructional practices on the Danielson Framework for Teaching. This practice demonstrates that school leaders have an effective system for using teacher observation to make informed decisions on assignments and succession plans.
Additional Finding

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<th>Quality Indicator:</th>
<th>4.2 Teacher Team and Leadership Development</th>
<th>Rating:</th>
<th>Proficient</th>
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</table>

Findings

The majority of teachers are engaged in structured inquiry around student work. Distributive leadership structures are in place through various teacher teams and leaders.

Impact

A cadre of teacher leaders ensure that teachers have a voice in key decisions that affect student learning. These teams of teachers analyze student work resulting in improved teacher practices and progress towards goals for groups of students.

Supporting Evidence

- In a grade three inquiry teacher team meeting, teachers looked at the latest post on demand essay and noticed that the students had improved in adding transition and in listing reasons in their opinion writing essays. Teachers had targeted reason and transition, as the focus for this essay and were gratified to see that students had improved. As teachers analyze this set of student work, they make decisions on the next learning. Teachers discussed having students use a variety of transitions in developing more fluid writing. Teachers also noticed that while students were embedding reasons in their opinion writing, they did not always explain their reasons and this limited the students to a level 2 on the essay. Teachers brainstormed ways to have students add supporting details and connect their reason to the topic of the essay. During this meeting, teachers shared looking at student work, had strengthened their instructional practice as it has helped them to make connections between the Common Core Learning Standards, and identify areas where they felt students might struggle to make adjustments in lessons, in response to anticipated misconceptions.

- In a meeting with teachers, they stated that the principal fosters a culture of teacher empowerment and collaboration through distributive leadership structures that support teacher leadership. There are various teacher groups in the school that allow for teacher to teacher support and drive instructional practice at the school. Teacher teams, such as grade leaders and inquiry leaders, focus on developing lessons that engage students in rigorous curriculum and ensure that students are exposed to lessons that have clear learning objectives. These engagements in looking at student work ensure that curriculum meets their needs. This structure ensures that teachers have a key voice in decisions that impact student learning.

- In a teacher team meeting, teachers from the Lighthouse team spoke about the work that they are doing to deepen social emotional learning and promote the 7 Habits of Highly Successful Students. Teachers in this team worked to develop student leadership. Teachers stated that distributive leadership structures allow them to lead this work that connects scholarship and citizenship together, so that students become proactive members and citizens in the school culture. In this team, teachers spoke about academic and an emotional share fair, as well as middle school preparation. Teachers stated that they have wide latitude in decisions that affect student learning across the school because the school and the various teacher teams in the school exemplify the ideas that it takes a village to raise a child.