Quality Review Report

2016-2017

J.H.S. 098 Herman Ridder
Junior High-Intermediate-Middle 12X098
1619 Boston Rd.
Bronx
NY 10460

Principal: Mark Turcotte

Dates of Review:
May 22, 2017 - May 23, 2017

Lead Reviewer: Buffie Whitfield
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

J.H.S. 098 Herman Ridder serves students in grade 6 through grade 8. You will find information about this school, including enrollment, attendance, student demographics, and data regarding academic performance, at http://schools.nyc.gov/Accountability/tools/report/default.htm.

School Quality Ratings

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Instructional Core</th>
<th>Area</th>
<th>Rating</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>To what extent does the school...</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>Developing</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>Additional Finding</td>
<td>Developing</td>
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<tr>
<td>School Culture</td>
<td>Area</td>
<td>Rating</td>
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<td><strong>To what extent does the school...</strong></td>
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<tr>
<td>1.4 Maintain a culture of mutual trust and positive attitudes that supports the academic and personal growth of students and adults</td>
<td>Additional Finding</td>
<td>Developing</td>
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<tr>
<td>3.4 Establish a culture for learning that communicates high expectations to staff, students and families, and provide supports to achieve those expectations</td>
<td>Additional Finding</td>
<td>Proficient</td>
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<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Systems for Improvement</th>
<th>Area</th>
<th>Rating</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>To what extent does the school...</strong></td>
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<tr>
<td>1.3 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>
<td>Proficient</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>
<td>Developing</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>Area of Celebration</td>
<td>Proficient</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>Area of Focus</td>
<td>Developing</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>
<td>Developing</td>
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</table>
Area of Celebration

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Quality Indicator:</th>
<th>4.1 Teacher Support and Professional Development</th>
<th>Rating:</th>
<th>Proficient</th>
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**Findings**

The school leadership uses the Danielson *Framework for Teaching* for targeted observations to analyze learning outcomes to elevate schoolwide teaching practices, and to provide effective and intentional feedback.

**Impact**

School leaders’ use of data from observations and the Danielson *Framework* provides meaningful feedback to teachers, fostering professional growth leading to improved teaching practice.

**Supporting Evidence**

- During observation conferences administrators refer to student work and previous evaluator notes to ensure clarity of expectations for teacher growth. During feedback sessions, teachers are also encouraged to seek support from teacher leaders who are an integral part of the feedback loop. These strategic and collaborative endeavors allow administrators and selected teacher peers to provide meaningful support to all teachers, resulting in their improved levels of effectiveness across domains as evidenced by observations to date in the *Advance* data.

- The principal, during the initial planning conferences, uses the time with each teacher to set his/her professional goals for the school year. Consequently, school leaders purposefully utilize the observation cycles and the teacher’s professional goals as checkpoints to provide feedback and support, and to inform and adjust professional development planning. During the course of the school year, school leaders and teachers are revising and refining goals, having discussions, and teachers receive verbal and written feedback after formal and informal observations. New teachers receive additional visits and feedback from both administration and lead teachers with a specific focus on assessment-driven questions and lesson discussions in order to support teachers in honing their skills. Additionally, the principal has in-depth conversations with teachers about effective teaching practices and the impact on student outcomes. Teachers stated that they learn from one another and attend more workshops to enhance their knowledge of content and pedagogical skills.

- Administrators give detailed feedback to teachers capturing their strengths and indicating suggested examples for their instructional growth. In the teacher meeting, teachers stated that feedback is clear and purposeful with concrete examples for improvement. This year, teachers are continuing to focus on questioning and discussion techniques as well as data-driven instruction. Through ongoing focused observations and follow-up support, supervisors have developed a cycle of continual improvement where feedback is specific, evidence-based, actionable, and timely.
Findings
The school is developing its structures for the majority of teachers to collaboratively engage in inquiry work, including the analysis of student work and student data.

Impact
The impact of teacher teams has yet to reach the instructional practices of the majority of teachers, thus limiting opportunities for increased student learning.

Supporting Evidence
- Teacher team members collaborate on activities such as creating unit maps aligned to Common Core Learning Standards and instructional shifts. Teamwork is contributing to school goals, such as the refinement of curricula for math. However, teacher reflections on their instruction and intervention pedagogical strategies indicate that impact of the teacher teamwork on student achievement is not yet refined. Teams are focused on gathering additional data to assess the impact of their teaching approaches used to date. Agendas collected from team meetings, indicate various topics discussed during meetings, such as content area bulletin board, writing rubric, math curriculum, social studies, and science teaching points. There was insufficient evidence of all teams engaging in inquiry-based collaborative work that involved the analysis of student work or data that resulted in moving specific sub-groups of students, and/or improving their collective classroom practices.

- During the observed team meeting, members of the team reviewed student work and used a rubric to rate the pieces. There was a general discussion of the scores and characteristics of student responses as participants shared noticings. However, the discussion did not thoroughly analyze the task to guide an accurate assessment of student mastery of the skills involved. Furthermore, it was also not clear what specific skills were issues for each student, and how interventions would be differentiated for students in each of the scoring categories shown on the report; the discussion was more focused on next steps than on the needs of individual students. When asked the impact of inquiry on teachers’ pedagogical practice, curriculum, and the team thus far, a teacher shared that, “We are in the infancy stages with this work.”

- Distributed leadership is developing across the school. To better support subject-specific departments, the school has begun developing lead teachers to assist with curriculum development, lesson design, and in-class implementation of techniques. Teacher-leads articulated that they felt empowered to be included on decisions towards the development and support of their peers. For example, during the teacher meeting, teachers spoke about support from each other and having the time to work together.
# Additional Finding

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

Curricula and academic tasks reflect the process of aligning their work to the Common Core Learning Standards and planning to provide students access. However, curricula and tasks inconsistently emphasize rigorous habits and higher-order skills across grades and subjects.

## Impact

Consistent access to and ownership of rigorous curricula that cognitively engage all students, including English Language Learners (ELLs) and students with disabilities, are uneven and hinder college and career readiness for all students.

## Supporting Evidence

- One of the school’s curriculum initiatives is to build and strengthen units. Teams are at different stages in developing Common Core-aligned curricula and performance tasks. Some teachers use modules from *EngageNY, Teachers College Reading and Writing Project (TCRWP)* while others create their own. Some lessons push student thinking and provide rigorous content-based tasks, yet others are inconsistent in the emphasis of rigorous tasks and higher-order thinking skills. For example, an English Language Arts (ELA) lesson challenges students to determine the author’s lead in a text, and cite evidence from the text. In another ELA lesson plan, essential questions, ‘What are Civil Rights and why do they matter?’ do not address multiple *Depth of Knowledge* (DOK) levels. These inconsistencies in the units and tasks hinder some students from having opportunities to have access to high-level academic tasks that develop higher-order thinking skills and meaningful engagement.

- Lesson plans across content areas do not yet consistently show evidence of planning to integrate literacy into cross-content instruction. For example, in an English as a Second Language lesson, visual aids were included to provide information for students on the habits of effective reading. However, science lesson plans evidenced that students were assigned identical recall tasks that did not reflect opportunities for high levels of student thinking and engagement. In science, many lessons revolved around worksheets. During the student interview, some students stated the work is not challenging.

- The school has implemented *CMP3* and *EngageNY* curricula in the math department, and academic tasks in the math department show evidence of alignment. For example, in one class the lesson plan incorporated several of the standards for math practice from the Common Core Learning Standards. However, the school has not yet implemented fully developed curricula in science. A learning target from a science lesson plan stated that students would write a lab report based off Thursday’s lab. Students used worksheets and were expected to answer the following questions as an end-of-lesson summary, “How did you like writing a lab report? What was your favorite part of lab and why? Is there a topic you wish we did a lab on?”
## Findings

There is an uneven application of differentiation and other instructional strategies across classrooms to provide appropriately challenging and rigorous learning opportunities that promote high achievement.

## Impact

The delivery of instruction inconsistently provides multiple entry points for students, the use of scaffolds and extensions is uneven, and questioning techniques do not always foster discussions that are appropriately challenging for all learners.

## Supporting Evidence

- In a math class, the teacher posed rapid-fire questions and students, including English Language Learners (ELLs), responded chorally to the teacher. Students sat in groups but worked independently. Other students finished the activity but were not provided with extensions to support their learning. Problems were not tiered, nor were there additional, differentiated problems to challenge students that are more advanced. Consequently, classrooms across the grades and subjects inconsistently use extensions and appropriate strategies to engage all learners.

- In an ELA class, where there were a number of students with disabilities, the lesson was the same for all students. The teacher asked and answered questions with little student input or the seven students responded chorally to the teacher. The teacher asked questions such as, “What is culture?” and “What was Lyddie walking on?” The teacher shared generalizations of what life was like in the 1950’s and 1960’s. The teacher asked students to imagine what life would be like in 2060 and then divided the students into groups to brainstorm language, clothes, transportation, communication, entertainment, and hairstyles. There were no additional supports to assist the students in understanding the content they were reading and the discussion consisted of just repeating opinions.

- In a few classes, students who participated in class discussions are beginning to use accountable conversation prompts. For instance, in some classes, students were prompted to turn and talk, but as the class was void of accountable talk stems to promote discussions and tiered questions, student engagement waned. Student-to-student interaction and discussion were inconsistent across the classrooms. Teachers in numerous classrooms essentially repeated answers and evaluated the accuracy of student responses themselves rather than inviting the class to agree, disagree, elaborate upon the responses of their peers, or ask questions of one another.
Additional Finding

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<tr>
<th>Quality Indicator:</th>
<th>2.2 Assessments</th>
<th>Rating:</th>
<th>Developing</th>
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Findings

Across classrooms, teachers use rubrics that are loosely aligned with the school’s curricula. Teacher assessment practices inconsistently show the use of ongoing checks for understanding.

Impact

Students receive limited actionable feedback and checks for understanding do not always lead to effective adjustments to instruction.

Supporting Evidence

- Many of the rubrics attached to student work showed criteria circled and/or highlighted with no teacher feedback. In places where the teacher provided rubric-aligned feedback, the feedback was about spelling, grammar, or conventions, and not about analysis, explanation, or connections to textual evidence. In a student meeting, students were unable to state a next step for improving the quality of their work other than to cite grammar and punctuation or to add more details. Feedback did not provide students with examples to improve their outcome. For example, a student stated that she needed to use transitional words on a writing work product. When asked about transitional words, she was unable to describe them. Other students were unable to share why they received the grade on their work or how to correctly answer the question. Some teachers use feedback designed for each task. Some of the student work collected, however, showed a “check,” “check-plus,” or 35/40 rather than actionable feedback or clear next steps.

- Some teachers engage in effective ongoing checks for understanding. For example, in a math class the teacher asked specific questions, with extended wait time, before calling on students to assess their level of comprehension. However, in other classes ongoing assessments were inconsistent. For example, in a grade seven class, the teacher asked students, “Does everyone agree?” Only a few students answered positively. Then the teacher asked, “Does anyone have anything different?” A few students indicated that they did, but instead of clarifying their understanding, the teacher continued with the lesson.

- During classroom visits, some teachers used exit slips to check for understanding while in some classrooms, teachers circulated the classrooms as a form of assessment. Moreover, in a few classrooms, students used a checklist to self-assess comprehension, but this was not evident in the majority of classrooms.
Additional Finding

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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

School leaders have established a culture for learning that communicates high expectations to the entire staff. School leaders and staff effectively communicate expectations connected to a path to college and career readiness to families.

Impact

The school provides training to staff and has a system of accountability to provide meaningful feedback to families about progress of their children towards goals.

Supporting Evidence

- The principal shares his high expectations with staff during faculty and professional development meetings. School leaders expressed the expectation that teachers understand each student’s entry point to support continued growth. This was evidenced by a review of the professional development plan and agendas from professional learning sessions as well as observation feedback of teacher practice. Teachers shared that the high expectations that the principal has developed are communicated through observation feedback. They stated that administration modeled and made them feel comfortable.

- Parents shared that teachers offer guidance and support and regularly send updates on their children's progress via phone and email outreach. Parents stated that the school offers workshops on the Common Core Learning Standards to help them better understand the expectations of those standards. During the parent meeting, it was shared that school leaders and teachers have an open-door policy, allowing parents at any time of the school day to discuss their children’s social and academic progress. Parents also noted that progress reports and meetings with teachers help with understanding their children’s progress in school and how they can help them at home. One parent shared that after meeting with her child’s teacher, the link for a website was provided to use at home which helped increase the student's reading level this year.

- School leaders communicate explicit expectations via bulletin boards, monthly newsletters, and assemblies and workshops for students and their families. Monthly calendars distributed to parents convey details on assessments, school and district events, and other information. Support for families, including family curriculum nights, orientation, and English classes for parents to gain language proficiency.