Quality Review Report

2016-2017

I.S. 117 Joseph H. Wade
Junior High-Intermediate-Middle 09X117
1865 Morris Ave.
Bronx
NY 10453

Principal: Delise Jones

Dates of Review:
May 9, 2017 - May 10, 2017

Lead Reviewer: Adam Breier
The Quality Review Report

The Quality Review is a two-day school visit by an experienced educator. During the review, the reviewer visits classrooms, talks with parents, students, teachers, and school leaders and uses a rubric to evaluate how well the school is organized to support student achievement.

The Quality Review Report provides a rating for all ten indicators of the Quality Review Rubric in three categories: Instructional Core, School Culture, and Systems for Improvement. One indicator is identified as the **Area of Celebration** to highlight an area in which the school does well to support student learning and achievement. One indicator is identified as the **Area of Focus** to highlight an area the school should work on to support student learning and achievement. The remaining indicators are identified as **Additional Finding**. This report presents written findings, impact, and site-specific supporting evidence for six indicators.

Information about the School

I.S. 117 Joseph H. Wade 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

### Instructional Core

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

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Area</th>
<th>Rating</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1.1 Ensure engaging, rigorous, and coherent curricula in all subjects, accessible for a variety of learners and aligned to Common Core Learning Standards and/or content standards</td>
<td>Additional Finding</td>
</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>
</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>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
### 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>Area of Focus</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>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>Area of Celebration</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>
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<tr>
<td>5.1 Evaluate the quality of school- level decisions, making adjustments as needed to increase the coherence of policies and practices across the school, with particular attention to the CCLS</td>
<td>Additional Finding</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Findings

School leaders support teacher development with frequent classroom observation cycles and student data analyses. Prompt, written feedback captures teachers’ strengths, challenges, and next steps using the Danielson Framework for Teaching.

Impact

Formal and informal classroom visits result in written feedback for teachers that make the expectations clear for teacher practice and the supports available to help teachers meet them.

Supporting Evidence

- School leaders conduct frequent classroom observations and provide feedback utilizing the Danielson Framework for Teaching. Each rated item is supported with evidence from the observed class to support the rating and with next steps teachers should take in order to grow in practice. In addition, classroom observations are planned based on individual teacher need as well as student need. This involves an initial observation cycle of the newer teachers and teachers on a formal improvement plan. This observation cycle is then followed by a cycle during which all remaining teachers, in order from the least to the most experienced, are officially observed. Additionally, cabinet meeting agendas reveals that analysis of student data has resulted in feedback to teachers regarding the design of priority questions, focused attention on teaching students how to identify and use text-based evidence, and strategies to use toward the goal of increasing accountable-talk activities in math classes.

- Observation reports contain feedback that captures teachers' strengths and weaknesses and is accompanied by next steps teachers should take in order to improve their practice and have an impact on student success. For example, in two reviewed observation reports, the school leader noted the instructional time lost due to ineffective classroom routines and procedures. These teachers were advised to visit the classroom of a particular teacher strong in classroom management and to take note of the different strategies employed. In another report, the school leader notes that the teacher’s lesson plan included checks for understanding that were utilized during the class, but that the teacher had not recorded any of the information learned from this assessment. A next step offered to this teacher advocated for a method of archiving the results of in-class assessment in order to inform adjustments to future instruction. Additionally, it was also suggested that this teacher identify each questions' level from Webb’s Depth of Knowledge tool in order to monitor the level of rigor reached through those same questions.

- In addition to the reports resulting from official classroom observations are the letters that follow informal classroom visits that contain next steps. Feedback to one teacher included suggestions regarding the integration of specific questions into lesson plans that would be used for the purpose of checking for understanding. Another example details advice to a teacher to write in larger letters on the board so that all students could see what is being written. Other examples of feedback to teachers through this method include advice to teachers to keep accurate assessment data and to use that data in designing instruction, implement strategies that require students to conduct academic discussions with each other, and to ensure that there are clear directions for students at each station in the form of task cards.
Findings
The school is developing an approach to culture-building, discipline, and social-emotional support. The school is also developing alignment among professional development (PD), family outreach, and student learning experiences.

Impact
Although the school is developing supports for students and aligning PD, outreach to families, and student experiences, including an advisory program and Positive Behavior Intervention System (PBIS), the impact of this work has not yet resulted in a culture in which students and adults treat each other respectfully or in which effective academic and personal behaviors are promoted across all grades.

Supporting Evidence

- Although there has been a decrease in overall reported disciplinary infractions by 30 percent compared to last year, the decrease in principal-level suspensions from last year to the current year is minimal. While there were twenty-three such suspensions in 2015-2016, as of April 21, 2017, two weeks prior to the school visit, there were already twenty-one such suspensions. Similarly, the decrease in superintendent-level suspensions is not commensurate with the decrease in reported infractions. While there were fifteen such suspensions in 2015-2016, there have been twelve such suspensions as April 21, 2017. Additionally there has been a one hundred percent increase in classroom removals from the 2015-2016 school year to April 21, 2017.

- Students reported there is an occasional lack of respect between students and teachers at this school. One student stated, and all present agreed, that teachers will "start with you so that you can respond and they can get you in trouble." Another student reported that it is common for a teacher to administer an on-the-spot quiz if students are disruptive. Additionally, parents reported that while there are adults at the school who care about their children, there are also adults who can be short-tempered and not supportive. A parent reported that her child was bullied in the stairwell by three students who damaged his book bag.

- While the school provides time for all students to join clubs that range in theme from sports, journalism, drama, and computer science, there is no programmatic venue through which all students benefit from learning experiences around effective academic and personal behaviors. Students reported that in the grade-eight advisory class, they explore and discuss topics around social-emotional learning and college and career choices. Students reported talking about staying away from drugs and avoiding peer pressure as well as plans for high school, after high school, and college. However, students also reported that there is no similar learning experience for students in either grade six or seven.

- The social worker delivered PD to teachers covering de-escalation strategies including topics such as self-protection, cycles of anger, appropriate uses of time-out, interventions for challenging students, addressing student refusal, and responding to student back-talk. Additionally, the PBIS program involves the issuance of behavior bucks as a reward for positive behavior. Megabucks are issued to entire classes. Behavior bucks can be spent on items ranging from school supplies to snacks. Megabucks can be spent on items such as a pizza party, trips, and a dress-down day for an entire class. However, these initiatives have not yet gained traction to consistently have a positive impact on student behaviors.
Additional Finding

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

School leaders and faculty are in the process of aligning curricula to Common Core Learning Standards and the instructional shifts. Rigorous habits and higher-order skills are inconsistently emphasized across curricula and tasks.

Impact

Lesson and unit plans evidence uneven alignment with the Common Core and applicable content area standards, as well as integration of the instructional shifts. Additionally, curricular documents evidence an inconsistent focus on emphasizing rigorous tasks for all students, including ELLs and students with disabilities.

Supporting Evidence

- A review of curricular documents revealed that unit and lesson plans note the Common Core Learning Standards or content area standards where appropriate. However, planning for the alignment of the instructional shifts is inconsistent. In a combined grade six and seven English Language Arts (ELA) lesson plan, students are to write a short response essay in which they argue for an amount of time watching television or using a tablet or phone. Students are to support their arguments with evidence from an article read in class. In a grade eight ELA lesson plan, students are assigned to identify the author’s major argument in a passage read in class and support their determination with text-based evidence. Additionally, in a grade seven math lesson plan students are assigned to evidence their understanding of congruence and similarity using multiple modalities including the use of physical models, written responses and narrative description.

- Curricula and academic tasks reflect planning so that a diversity of learners could have access. The graphic organizer that accompanies a grade seven social studies lesson plan includes a scaffold designed to help students annotate. An English as a new language (ENL) lesson plan includes a variety of scaffolded supports including visuals, graphs and additional narration. This lesson plan also makes clear that students are grouped homogenously by language acquisition levels which are supported by differentiated reading selections. A grade-eight math lesson plan includes reference to the differentiated groups designed to include one student with a disability as well as one high level student each. Also, a grade-seven ELA lesson plan details the names of specific students and the groups to which they are assigned along with a narrative description as to why they are assigned in that way. In addition to this, accountable talk stems are available for all students and purposely placed on specific students’ desks based on their need for this support.

- A grade-six lesson plan details how students are intentionally placed in one of three groups, each assigned tasks adjusted as per the group’s status as exceeding, meeting, or not meeting standards. While a majority of documents reveal careful planning so that so that a diversity of students will have access to curricula and tasks, there are examples of planning for which the lowest and highest achieving students are not accounted. An ELA lesson plan serving a combined grade-six and -seven class, all of whom are students with disabilities, indicates that students will be in flexible groups. However, there are only two groups each of which consists only of students from one of the two particular grades. Apart from grouping students by grade, there is no planning for the provision of differentiated materials or scaffolds. In a grade-seven math lesson plan covering properties and straight lines, the section that details the supports for ELLs and students with disabilities indicate only generalized statements such as “Visual Models,” and “Bold/Highlighted Words” without any indication as to how these are reflected in the work students are to be assigned.
Findings

Across classrooms, multiple entry points into the curricula were inconsistently provided to students. Work products and discussions inconsistently reflected high levels of student participation.

Impact

Teaching lacked strategies that would have enabled diverse learners access to lessons. Additionally, students have limited opportunities to engage in appropriately challenging tasks, or demonstrate higher-order thinking skills in discussions.

Supporting Evidence

- During a grade-eight ELA class, the teacher chunked the reading about school-based mental health services into smaller portions for students of varying need. The vast majority of classes, however, were without multiple entry points into the curricula resulting in uneven student engagement. For example, all students in a grade-seven math class received identical worksheets and had no scaffolded supports made available to them. Similarly, in a grade-eight ELA class in which students were to determine an author’s purpose, all students read from the same text, not differentiated for ELLs or students with disabilities, nor supported by scaffolded supports. Additionally, during a grade-six science class, students were conducting an experiment that was to evidence whether or not a gas has weight or mass. All students had identical materials without the support of scaffolded supports that would allow ELLs and students with disabilities access to the lesson.

- Prior to launching an independent reading activity during which students were to annotate a text, they were directed to turn to a partner and discuss the different strategies they would normally use while annotating a text. Students in a grade-seven ELA class worked in groups of three in creating a survey that would gauge students on the different activities in which they engage that may have a negative effect on their mental health. Some of the questions created by student groups would ask survey participants to discuss their opinion on the development of a teenager’s brain, how much sleep they get every night, how much time they spend reading and looking at screens, as well as the staple foods that make up their daily diet. Additionally, students in an ENL class consisting of students in grades seven and eight turned to their partners and discussed their responses to the quick-write prompt which asked them to look at a variety of images and discuss what they conveyed about the use of pesticides on consumable produce.

- Although students were engaged in student-to-student discussion in some classes, opportunities for students to engage in high levels of thinking and discussion were limited. During a grade-seven bilingual math class, the teacher accepted choral responses from multiple students at the same time to all questions while some students said nothing at all. Students in a grade-six science class were divided into two groups while two students in each group followed instructions as to how to build a barometer from the supplies provided. Once these two students were done, the other pair of students who had just watched other students build a barometer engaged in the identical task. While the second identical barometer was being constructed, the students who had already engaged in this activity were not tasked with a different activity. Instead, they were supposed to wait for the remaining students in their group before they could all move on to the next step.
Additional Finding

<table>
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<tr>
<th>Quality Indicator:</th>
<th>2.2 Assessment</th>
<th>Rating:</th>
<th>Developing</th>
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</table>

Findings
The school is beginning to work toward the use of common assessments. Teachers’ assessment practices inconsistently reflect the use of ongoing checks for understanding.

Impact
Results of common assessments are used to identify students who need extra support in math and ELA. Teachers inconsistently utilize checks for understanding and results of common assessments to modify instruction to meet students’ learning needs.

Supporting Evidence

- Analysis of State math exam data revealed that students were struggling with writing constructive written responses in math. To target this struggle, teachers are implementing a quick write activity across grades and content areas. It was also reported that to address this deficiency teachers were implementing lessons with embedded accountable talk strategies every Friday. Although this may be utilized on Fridays, observed evidence of infrequent student-to-student discussions, along with the acceptance of choral responses by teachers without requiring all students’ contribution to classroom discussions, evidences that this strategy is not becoming a consistent practice beyond the Fridays on which those lessons are delivered. Data is not yet available to show the success of these initiatives.

- Data from the State ELA exam, as well as an online diagnostic tool utilized at the school, made clear that students were struggling with citing textual evidence. As a result, helping students to identify the facts in a piece of writing and then use that information in a written product became an instructional focus as a result. Additionally, the master class schedule has been adjusted so that all students receive additional reading support two to three periods per week. For these additional reading support periods, teachers use an online diagnostic tool to identify student deficiencies and provide leveled readings and correlated activities. Data is not yet available to show the success of these initiatives.

- Teachers are provided with a list of their students whose scores place them slightly over proficient and are thus, at risk for slipping below that mark. Every teacher is tasked with creating an action plan for five of their students who are in this category. This initiative has been titled Target Five. Review of Target Five action plans reveal that teachers are creating six-week plans that target their Target Five students’ struggles. However, evidence of this data’s use by teachers in the adjustment of instruction is uneven. As documented in the letters that result from data check-in meetings the principal has with teachers, one teacher was unable to produce the Target Five action plans in February. Another teacher was unable to meaningfully discuss which students in his class were at any level given the data provided. Additionally, three teachers were unable to discuss how they were using the data provided by the school to adjust instruction.

- During a grade-seven social studies class, the teacher announced that there were some factual errors in students’ written responses from the exit ticket and that before engaging in the day’s lesson, students were to revisit their exit slips. Additionally, teachers were circulating through their classrooms and checking-in with students. However, there were multiple observed missed opportunities for teachers to check for student understanding given the preponderance of choral responses and discussions in which all students were not required to participate in the class conversations.
## Additional Finding

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

**Findings**

The majority of teachers are engaged in structured, inquiry-based professional collaborations that promote achievement of school goals and implementation of the Common Core Learning Standards. Distributed leadership structures are in place.

**Impact**

Teachers’ collaborations have strengthened their instructional capacity. Teachers make decisions regarding the power standards that guide instruction across the school and choices of PD.

**Supporting Evidence**

- The social studies teacher team found that students were struggling with citing text evidence in that students are generally stating claims, but then not supporting them with specific evidence. After conducting inter-visitations and researching possible solutions, the teacher team determined that it would be best to implement the Respond, Analyze, Cite, and Evaluate (RACE) protocol. Teachers reported that this has helped strengthen their instructional practices. Additionally, the science teacher team reported that students were struggling with content-heavy vocabulary. The team determined that they would all use a model of vocabulary instruction requiring students to define new words and support their understanding of them by providing examples, offering characteristics, and drawing visual representations. Teachers reported that they began using this strategy approximately two months prior to the school visit.

- Teachers reported that as a result of the conversations regarding teaching practices and the sharing of strategies at teacher team meetings, their instructional capacity has improved. One teacher reported having had a difficulty in writing language objectives for ELL students. The ENL teacher on this team modeled this process and provided sentence starters. Subsequently, the ENL teacher’s coaching was successful and warranted the delivery of this in a PD for all faculty. Another teacher reported that a difficulty in facilitating a student-to-student discussion was successfully addressed through a role-play activity between herself and a teacher team colleague.

- Teacher members of the leadership cabinet meet with school leaders and lead their respective teacher teams. An example of teacher leaders having a voice in key decisions was in the investigation and subsequent decision to employ a specific format that all teacher teams would use in order to focus their inquiry work. Another example of the impact teacher leaders have had on the school is the college readiness initiative in which all teachers post the colleges they attended and from which they earned their degrees. Teachers reported that teacher leaders often lead PD for the whole faculty and for their respective teacher teams.