Quality Review Report

2016-2017

J.H.S. 118 William W. Niles
Junior High-Intermediate-Middle 10X118
577 East 179th St.
Bronx
NY 10457

Principal: Giulia Cox

Dates of Review:
March 2, 2017 - March 3, 2017 Lead

Reviewer: Lenneen Gibson
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

J.H.S. 118 William W. Niles 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>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>1.1 Ensure engaging, rigorous, and coherent curricula in all subjects, accessible for a variety of learners and aligned to Common Core Learning Standards and/or content standards</td>
<td>Additional Finding</td>
<td>Proficient</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1.2 Develop teacher pedagogy from a coherent set of beliefs about how students learn best that is informed by the instructional shifts and Danielson Framework for Teaching, aligned to the curricula, engaging, and meets the needs of all learners so that all students produce meaningful work products</td>
<td>Additional Finding</td>
<td>Proficient</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2.2 Align assessments to curricula, use on-going assessment and grading practices, and analyze information on student learning outcomes to adjust instructional decisions at the team and classroom levels</td>
<td>Additional Finding</td>
<td>Proficient</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 Celebration</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>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>Area of Focus</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>
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<tr>
<th>Quality Indicator:</th>
<th>1.4 Positive Learning Environment</th>
<th>Rating:</th>
<th>Well Developed</th>
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</table>

Findings

Structures, such as an advisory program and the partnerships forged with governmental agencies, promote a safe and inclusive school culture for all students.

Impact

Practices are in place to ensure that each student is known well by an adult and ensures that student voice is included to lead school improvement efforts.

Supporting Evidence

- School leaders and staff ensure that supports, such as a daily advisory program, promote a safe and inclusive school culture for all students. Teachers that served on the advisory committee designed the curriculum. The curriculum is organized into five units that span two months each on topics such as: organization, respect and empathy, healthy living, healthy relationships, and social consciousness. The weekly organization of the advisory classes entails: post weekend check in with the students regarding school events, time management using a school planner, mood meter (check of student emotions after a weekend), videos, and activities including journal responses and discussions, independent reading, study skills, and completing homework assignments. Teachers during the teacher meeting stated that advisory has changed the culture of the school for students having a vehicle to express their feelings. During the student group meeting, students stated that the student government group allows students to generate ideas and plan events such as a spelling bee, taking a trip to Flushing, Queens to supplement their Mandarin instruction, overseeing the college awareness week, door competition, and conducting fundraisers. Because of these practices, school suspensions have reduced from 214 in the 2015-16 school year to 165 in the 2016-17 school year and level one through five infractions have decreased from 380 in the 2015-16 school year to 249 in the 2016-17 school year.

- Structures are in place to ensure that each student is known well by an adult. The advisors of the advisory team work in tandem with the attendance team to track chronically absent students and conduct outreach to the families. Data on student attendance, academic performance, and behavior is tracked through attendance team meetings and maintained by the advisors. To provide additional support for families in need of services, there is a school based mental health clinic to provide students and their families with counseling services. Additional crisis intervention support is also provided by a mental health consultant program through a partnership with the Department of Education and the Department of Health and Mental Hygiene.

- Students are lauded for their academic progress, citizenship, and perfect attendance by being recognized as the student of the month. Students are also afforded opportunities to broaden their learning experiences through peer support and by attending trips as an outgrowth of the advisory program.
**Area of Focus**

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

**Findings**

Grade and content teams are engaged in structured collaborations that are beginning to analyze assessment data and student work for students they share.

**Impact**

Teacher team practices are loosely connected to school goals and the implementation of the Common Core Learning Standards that do not result in strengthening teacher practice or improved student performance.

**Supporting Evidence**

- A mathematics teacher team was observed conducting an inquiry meeting that analyzed an algebra benchmark assessment. A review of the student work identified three common student misconceptions. An item analysis of the exam question was also reviewed. The teachers came to a consensus that baseline information is required prior to assigning a student a question of this caliber, teachers need to be aware of the language being used during instruction, highlight key words, and the necessity to determine what is expected of ninth grade algebra. Moreover, school leaders stated that teachers’ teams are looking at data such as Degrees of Reading Power (DRP), the English Language Learner Analysis Tool (EDAT), Achieve 3000, and performance tasks to group students, include scaffolds for upcoming units, and to alter rubrics. However, the impact of the teacher team work on student performance or improved teacher practice was not evident.

- A review of a sixth grade science teacher team document noted that teachers conducted an item analysis of an assessment. Specific questions, the Next Generation Science Standards (NGSS) that correlated to the question as well as class and school performance results were also reviewed. In addition, teachers sought to answer the question, “How can I use this information to inform my teaching? What grade/standard/learning progression do these connect to?” The document showed that teachers identified instructional strategies such as modeling, asking questions, and constructing explanations were identified. Teachers developed a bookmark that denotes close reading symbols due to this work. An English Language Arts (ELA) teacher team analyzed an eighth grade baseline assessment. However, the impact of the teacher teamwork on student performance and strengthening the instructional capacity of teachers was not evident.

- Teachers are meeting in content and grade level teams twice a week, and during common planning time. During the meeting with teachers, when queried, teachers stated that during this planning time and teacher team meetings, teachers are modifying the curricula to meet the needs of the diverse learners, by using DRP scores so that texts are leveled, designing common units of study on the grade level, and designing pre- and baseline assessments. Although evidence shows that teachers are modifying the curricula to meet the needs of diverse learners, the use of an inquiry approach across all content and grade level teams was developing and loosely connected to school goals or to the implementation of the Common Core Learning Standards. There was no evidence of the impact of these teams on the improvement of student learning needs, or improvement in teacher practice.
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

Academic tasks and unit plans consistently emphasize rigorous habits. Curricula and tasks are planned and refined.

Impact

Curricula are refined using student data so that diverse learners have access to higher-order thinking skills and cognitively engaging curricula.

Supporting Evidence

- An English Language Arts (ELA) academic task required students to construct an analytical essay to analyze the author, Toni Morrison’s use of three literary elements to support the theme in chapter nine of the text, *The Bluest Eye*. Students also had to use the literary elements to demonstrate the interconnectedness of social construct. Similarly another ELA academic task required students to construct an argument for preserving a world wonder. Students also had to make modern day connections, such as using a current day solution for the preservation of the world wonder as well as compare what is already in place. The pre-teaching of vocabulary words with visual aids, leveled graphic organizers, sentence starters and discussion frames were all cited as supports for diverse learners. An ELA lesson plan for diverse learners described a task in which students analyzed a transcript of a speech delivered during a sport award ceremony. Students were charged with the task of analyzing a speech for the persuasive language of ethos, pathos, and logos. Through the analysis of persuasive language, students had to ascertain if the argument presented in the speech was logical. Students used a graphic organizer to chart their evidence from the speech.

- In a social studies unit plan, a project required students to research and report the work of two people from the progressive era, identify the issues addressed by the persons selected, describe the changes and the strategies used to achieve change. The follow-up task required students to write an essay of a social problem and describe how current day individuals can use the strategies from the individuals from the progressive era to achieve change. Students must connect the previous assignment to the current assignment. A science unit plan described a biome group project in which students were assigned a biome and had to create a brochure to “sell” their plot of land to prospective buyers. Group members had to assume the roles of botanist, geographer, climatologist, and zoologist, as well as include the perspective of each scientist in their project. The plan cites that diverse learners would receive information in their native language and receive leveled Lexile readings.

- Tasks and curricula show refinement based on student work and data. An ELA lesson plan had designated students grouped into teams based on their winter 2017 Degrees of Reading Power (DRP) data. Each pair consisted of low and high performing students. In a mathematics lesson plan, the academic task was refined using leveled problems for all diverse learners. An ELA lesson plan was refined using the 2016 state ELA test scores.
**Additional Finding**

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

**Findings**

Teaching strategies, such as the use of scaffolds and student discussions, consistently provide multiple entry points for all learners.

**Impact**

Student discussions reflect high levels of student thinking and participation contributing to engagement in appropriately challenging tasks and demonstration of higher-order thinking skills.

**Supporting Evidence**

- In an English Language Arts class, the objective of the lesson required students to create scripts that demonstrated their knowledge of the sport report unit vocabulary by working collaboratively. Students were working on a do now activity that asked them to select a vocabulary word, define it, use it in a sentence, and draw an illustration that shows the meaning of the word. Students engaged in a turn and talk to discuss their choices of selected vocabulary words. Afterwards, students worked collaboratively on their vocabulary theater mini-scripts activity by using a scaffold that supported students in crafting their sport-themed dialogues. Students engaged in group discussions brainstorming on the focus, setting, characters, and visual aids required for the script. Students were overheard using academic vocabulary such as constructive criticism in their conversations. All members of the groups were observed contributing to the group activity and completing their scaffold.

- In a science class, students were working collaboratively in groups of three to four students working on a disease transmission activity. Student groups assumed the role of epidemiologists and were given a case study to discern the disease transmission sequence, identify the virus, the signs and symptoms, and two solutions to combat the spread of the pathogen. Students in their groups were overheard discussing disease symptoms and transmissions for rabies by noting how the infirmed were exposed. Students groups created a poster of their case study and the class conducted a gallery walk of the posters with students presenting their cases. Similarly in a mathematics class, the aim of the lesson was, “How do we solve word problems using algebraic expressions?” A student group was observed devising a mathematical expression to determine the cost of headphones sold online. In the group, students were debating what the expression should be and noted when a member was incorrect in their reasoning when assigning a decimal point. Student discussions and work products reflected high levels of thinking and participation and in some cases, student ownership was also demonstrated.

- In a social studies class, students were working on document-based questions about the geography of ancient Greece. A student noted that Greece was mountainous, and the teacher asked, “Were the mountains a good or a bad thing?” A follow-up question was, “How does the trading relate to the geography?” A student replied that the Greeks would use the water as part of their trading practices. Additional students contributed to the conversation. Students were observed annotating and highlighting key points in the documents to further engage with the text. In a class with diverse learners, students analyzed a transcript of a speech from a sports award program through the perspectives of ethos, pathos, and logos using a graphic organizer, as well as text in their native language. Students identified evidence from the speech that aligned to each of the three examples of persuasive language. In a class with diverse learners, students were tasked with creating their own rubric for a speech. All students were provided a graphic organizer to create the assessment criteria for the speech. However, the English Language Learners (ELLs) showed signs of struggling with this activity because the graphic organizer was insufficiently scaffolded for them to successfully contribute to this activity.
Additional Finding

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Quality Indicator:</th>
<th>2.2 Assessment</th>
<th>Rating:</th>
<th>Proficient</th>
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Findings

Teachers use State and standards-based rubrics that are aligned with the school’s curricula. Teachers’ assessments practices reflect the use of checks for understanding.

Impact

Checks for understanding and student self-assessment are employed so that adjustments are made to meet the needs of all learners. Teacher feedback to students is actionable and meaningful regarding student achievement.

Supporting Evidence

- Teachers consistently check for understanding to ensure the learning needs of students are met. In a mathematics class, the aim of the lesson was, “How do we solve word problems using algebraic expressions?” Students in groups were working on differentiated problem sets. The teacher polled the class by having students raise their hands to check for understanding and a student asked to make an adjustment to the lesson by altering an expression in the word problem. Students groups were engaged in peer evaluation using a five-point group self-assessment rubric.
  
  In a science class with diverse learners, students were conducting presentations on Newton's law of motion. Students were observed using a three-point group presentation rubric to peer assess student presentations. In addition, student presenters also utilized a listening rubric to assess the attentiveness of their peers as they delivered the presentation.

- In an ELA class with diverse learners, the teacher checked for understanding by asking questions. Through the line of questioning, the teacher noticed that students were unclear of what the term, “claim” meant and adjusted the lesson to define the word “claim.” In another ELA class, the teacher checked for understanding using strategies such as polling students by raising their hands, and thumbs up or thumbs down. Students also used a four-point vocabulary theatre rubric to assess their classwork. In a social studies class, students used a document-based question checklist to assess their classwork. As the teacher walked around conferencing with student groups, the teacher noticed that students were not using the checklist and adjusted the lesson to have the students restate the expectations for the task.

- Teachers used State-aligned and standards-based rubrics to provide actionable feedback to students. For example, a student’s writing piece was assessed using a State expository writing rubric. The feedback provided to the student was that the writing was insightful and well organized. The recommendation to the student noted to edit his/her writing and be mindful of punctuation. A standards-based writing rubric was used to assess a student’s writing piece. Another student was commended for using evidence in his/her writing and attaching drafts showing the writing process. However, the recommendation to the student included making more connections to the evidence in the writing by deepening his/her explanations in writing.
**Findings**

School leaders and staff convey high expectations by establishing a culture for learning to families that is connected to college and career readiness through an online grading portal, progress reports, and a school calendar.

**Impact**

School leaders convey high expectations to the families and provide feedback to help families understand student progress towards those expectations and prepare students for the next level.

**Supporting Evidence**

- School leaders and staff convey high expectations and provide feedback connected to college and career readiness to families through their online grading system to keep them abreast with student performance. Families also receive a monthly school calendar, four written progress reports, and report cards for the year. The school uses an automatic calling system to keep families apprised of school events. Weekly parent engagement meetings also keep families aware of their child’s academic performance. “Back to school” night provided parents with an overview of school policies and instructional expectations to ensure student success. Incoming families have an opportunity to attend an orientation to be cognizant of the school’s expectations. During the parent meeting, the parents attested to the different modes of communication used to alert families of their child’s performance.

- Starting in seventh grade, the guidance counselor begins the high school articulation process by conducting a series of meetings with the parents. During this time, the high school application process is deconstructed to support families, as they prepare their child for the next level. In the 8th grade, the guidance counselor conducts a five week cycle approach to the high school application process with the students that is inclusive of additional parent meetings. Using a data approach, guidance counselors create a student profile that uses the high school a previous student attended, the high school credit accumulation, and if there is overall student success in the attending high school.

- College trips to neighboring colleges are facilitated by the guidance counselors. Students in the student meeting mentioned that alumni visit the school and conduct class presentations to the students about the transition to high school and their experiences. During college awareness week, students receive daily lessons about an aspect of the college application process, such as deciding on a college, college benefits and statistics, and exploring a virtual college tour. College week culminates with a door decorating contest and students write a journal entry about how they plan to use the information learned over the course of the week.