Quality Review Report

2016-2017

P.S. 163 Arthur A. Schomburg
Elementary 09X163
2075 Webster Ave.
Bronx
NY 10457

Principal: Dilsia Martinez

Dates of Review:
January 18, 2017 - January 19, 2017

Lead Reviewer: Joan Prince
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


School Quality Ratings

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Instructional Core</th>
<th>Area</th>
<th>Rating</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>To what extent does the school...</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>Area of Celebration</td>
<td>Well Developed</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1.2 Develop teacher pedagogy from a coherent set of beliefs about how students learn best that is informed by the instructional shifts and Danielson Framework for Teaching, aligned to the curricula, engaging, and meets the needs of all learners so that all students produce meaningful work products</td>
<td>Area of Focus</td>
<td>Developing</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2.2 Align assessments to curricula, use on-going assessment and grading practices, and analyze information on student learning outcomes to adjust instructional decisions at the team and classroom levels</td>
<td>Additional Finding</td>
<td>Proficient</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
### School Culture

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Area</th>
<th>Rating</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1.4 Maintain a culture of mutual trust and positive attitudes that supports the academic and personal growth of students and adults</td>
<td>Additional Finding</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3.4 Establish a culture for learning that communicates high expectations to staff, students and families, and provide supports to achieve those expectations</td>
<td>Additional Finding</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

### Systems for Improvement

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Area</th>
<th>Rating</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<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>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Area of Celebration

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Quality Indicator:</th>
<th>1.1 Curriculum</th>
<th>Rating:</th>
<th>Well Developed</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>

Findings

The school leader and faculty engage in a rigorous process of curriculum development aligned to the Danielson Framework for Teaching. Higher order thinking skills are consistently emphasized in curricula and academic tasks in a coherent and strategic way across grades and content areas.

Impact

Curricular decisions build coherence and rigorous habits for all learners, including students with disabilities and English Language Learners (ELLs). Across grades and content areas, student thinking to promote college and career readiness is present in the curriculum for all students.

Supporting Evidence

- Curricula provide evidence of rigorous academic tasks aligned to the Common Core Learning Standards and the Danielson Framework for Teaching through the adoption of the Teachers College Reading and Writing curriculum. In addition, supplemental programs and materials to meet the needs of the various student populations are incorporated into English Language Arts (ELA) such as Foundational Skills in Disguise as well as Fundations and Number Talks for lower grades and Fountas and Pinnell for leveled reading assessment in grades two through five. GO Math! is used to provide students with mathematical practice when problem solving. Teacher-developed lessons have been added to this curriculum to cover time and measurement in grade one. The FOSS program, a kit providing hands-on science experiences, is utilized for science instruction and Passport through Social Studies is used in all grades. There are academic vocabulary initiatives that differentiate word study, including iReady. The school is emphasizing the use of nonfiction texts across all subject areas and engagement through questioning and discussions deepen the study and application of math. One teacher shared, "we are looking at what students do and know, and adapt units of study to have more scaffolds and Depth of Knowledge questioning."

- Lesson planning efforts include rigor, engagement through questioning and discussion, and differentiation. This set of activities is consistently included in curriculum units across all grades and seen in lesson plans providing opportunities for all students to work in small groups, independently and in full-class activities as well. Consistent use of academic vocabulary and higher order questioning skills, with three higher-order thinking questions in every lesson. The integration of the instructional shifts and college and career readiness skills has been facilitated by teacher led staff development, use of informational texts and myON, an online library for resources accessible in the classroom and at home. Teachers adjust materials used for instruction in order to promote cohesiveness across the grades. Students are provided trade books and access to online resources to research topics. The resulting coherence ensures that students experience learning through specific domain texts not only in English Language Arts (ELA) but in science and social studies as well. For example, in a kindergarten through grade two integrated Co-Teaching class, students were learning to look at ends of words and asked to see patterns. The curriculum pieces were in place with a strong emphasis on vocabulary and making connections. In a grade four class, students were taking notes on post-its, prioritizing information as they read about the Boston Tea Party. There was coherence of curricula practice seen in all classes visited.

- Unit plans in all content areas include multiple designs of academic tasks with numerous scaffolds and entry points in addition to extensions for the advanced learners. The school has focused on promoting higher-order thinking skills through workshops on improving accountable talk in partner and group work. Teachers, teacher leaders and coaches assess and refine the curriculum units to promote more higher-order thinking skills.
Findings

Teaching strategies are becoming aligned to the curricula and beginning to reflect use of the Danielson Framework for Teaching and a set of shared beliefs around teaching practices including rigor, engagement through questioning and discussion, and differentiation. Multiple entry points into the curricula are uneven across classrooms.

Impact

The lack of multiple entry points into the curricula leads to limited active participation of all learners, including struggling learners and ELLs. Students are inconsistently engaged in activities that require higher-order thinking skills and discussions.

Supporting Evidence

- While some teachers asked level 2 and 3 Depth of Knowledge questions throughout their lessons, or had strong guiding questions built into group work assignments, there were uneven levels of discussion and student engagement observed in some classrooms visits. For example, in one second grade class where students were working on sequence words and connections to their daily lives, students were working in groups, sharing examples like “getting dressed and brushing teeth” are good things to do in the morning. Students used protocols such as “I noticed she was right” and “we should make a list.” When students could not answer the questions assigned the teacher came over and answered the question without facilitating a discussion with the students.

- While there was consistent evidence of multiple entry points and scaffolds for struggling learners in the form of rubrics, graphic organizers and sentence prompts, extensions for more advanced students were limited. In another class the students were completing a graphic organizer on how families grow and change over time and a timeline was on the interactive white board. Advanced students had completed the work and were speaking to classmates to assist them. The class was conducted as a group and all questions were teacher directed. The practice of teacher-centered lessons was evident in several classes visited. Many teachers across grades at the team meetings expressed that they are beginning to feel more comfortable with lessons being facilitated by students.

- Students in the upper grades are starting to justify their responses by citing textual evidence, crafting their own questions and challenge one another’s viewpoint. For example in the fourth grade class working on gathering information on the American Revolution, students were taking notes on post-its to use as evidence. A turn and talk where students discussed cause and effect resulted in good questions such as “Why did they tax tea?” and “Why was this information important?” Most students were not able to complete this task. However, the curriculum structures using rigorous texts and discussion prompts were in place.
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 across grades and content areas create common assessments, rubrics and grading policies that are aligned with the school’s curricula. Student progress towards goals and checks for understanding across grades and subject areas are embedded into lesson plans.

Impact

Students are provided actionable feedback and teachers make adjustments to instruction and curricula, based on data from schoolwide assessments.

Supporting Evidence

- Students complete performance-based assessments that become part of their portfolio. Both formative and summative assessments are used across all grades. In addition to teachers creating pre- and post-assessments, in math and ELA, interim assessments are used to guide re-teaching and student groupings. Grading policies are uniform across the school and are reviewed by the principal and the school leadership team along with teacher teams to ensure they reflect the alignment of instruction to content areas and also to align with Measures of Student Learning assessments. It was assessed that math scores were down from the previous year, resulting in a change of classroom math time from 45 minutes to 80 minutes.

- Curricula maps and lesson plans provide evidence the school is embedding the use of assessment and on-going checks for understanding. Teachers use common rubrics and pre and post-assessment across grades and subjects to adjust curricula and instruction. Checklists are used to gather information about students’ progress toward goals. Every unit teachers has a baseline assessment and the results are used to modify the plans based on the data. For example, a grade one rubric for assessing how to do procedural writing was used to determine if students could write ideas and content using organizational skills such as transition words along with introductory and concluding statements. This data was used to determine that students shared in research and had made attempts to use information gathered, but needed instructional support to become a proficient writer. Teachers use rubrics aligned with the school’s curricula to provide actionable feedback to students regarding their achievement and gain information about the student learning outcomes. Task-specific rubrics were developed after accessing data using item skill analysis in ELA.

- Students stated that they are given feedback on next steps on assignment rubrics and that there is peer assessment. Students are aware of their reading level and one student explained that he understands the feedback he is given on an assignment and uses it to improve. Teachers use checklists to gather information about students’ progress during lessons such as conferencing, stop and jot, and hands up. For example during a grade four English as a New Language math lesson, students were able to complete the math module referring to visual animations. The teacher used math software to reinforce student understanding and track answers on her iPad, which provided the opportunity to assess learned concepts and establish re-teaching groups.
Additional Finding

<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 a culture for learning to students and provide training so that all members of the school community can support increased student achievement. Trainings and workshops are offered that connect expectations to college and career readiness.

Impact

Trainings on the Danielson Framework for Teaching and elements of instruction are provided to the entire staff, resulting in a system of accountability for those expectations. In addition, feedback provided to families helps them to understand student progress toward those expectations.

Supporting Evidence

- High expectations for student learning and positive character traits are communicated to the entire school. Input from teachers and families drives impact on initiatives, curriculum decisions and special programs that support student success. In the teacher team meetings it was stated that the support of administration, and by their colleagues, strengthens a common language and provides a strong culture of learning as reflected through extensive professional development, modeling, inter-visitations and frequent observations with effective feedback to teachers. A school-wide college and career readiness initiative has been established and implemented to heighten students’ awareness of various careers and college choices. Teachers have college banners displayed with school names and where they are located. There are lessons embedded into the curriculum where students conduct research on various colleges and careers. In other lessons in the program, students are given foundational tools to read, write and organize their thoughts connecting to awareness of opportunities. For example, in a grade one class students are writing about zoo animals and the jobs that are available to take care of the animals and the zoo grounds.

- Workshops and performance updates keep families apprised of student progress around learning and career and college goals. Even in the lower grades, college and careers are mentioned consistently in student discussions as being part of the school wide expectations. Teacher professional development along with parent and family workshops provide information on the importance of exam expectations to meet the Common Core Learning Standards and to prepare for the next grade level. Parents shared that teachers offer guidance and support, regularly send updates home via reports, phone calls and email outreach. Parents and families participate in meetings with teachers to understand the academic requirements for each grade and actively seek help if needed. High expectations, as stated by the administration to teachers and parents, include that every student will acquire skills and knowledge reflective of a strong and engaging learning environment allowing students to have a voice, such as in choosing clubs, designing trips and opportunities tailored to their individual class needs.

- Teachers are guided and supervised by school leaders with extensive teaching experience who provide clear expectations for pedagogical and professional practice via verbal and written communication. The school has a technology coach and is using Smart Boards, laptop and software in ELA, math and social studies to teach students new technology. These expectations include that every student will graduate with 21st century skills and have foundational knowledge in reading, writing and math reflective of a strong and engaging learning environment.
Additional Finding

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

Findings

The principal and assistant principals, teacher leaders and instructional leaders support the development of all teachers with effective feedback and next steps. This feedback accurately captures strengths and challenges using the Danielson Framework for Teaching to articulate clear expectations for teacher practice.

Impact

Accountable talk at teacher team meetings, self and peer reflections and a focus on instructional learning walks all support teacher development and practice.

Supporting Evidence

- Feedback given to teachers outlines the support that is available to them to improve their practice. Administration conducts weekly conferences with teachers to discuss their progress in meeting their own goals and to determine what support might be needed to improve pedagogical practices and aim at higher levels of achievement for their students. Teacher growth is supported by effective feedback and next steps from observations and data obtained from Advance. Feedback to teachers supports development, next steps using the Danielson Framework for Teaching. The data obtained from Advance informs professional development and teacher/administrator performance based decisions. The school leaders and teacher leaders support the development of teachers, including those new to the profession, with effective feedback and next steps using cycles of classroom observations and analysis of student work and data.

- During the school leader interview, it was stated that teacher rounds have been expanded and are being led by teachers to examine their own practice. Teachers meet to discuss these observations using a set protocol and develop records of practice. Teachers are benefiting and developing a common language and tools for creating optimal learning environments. This has contributed to another form of professional development through embedded support. The instructional leadership team consists of the principal, assistant principal, assessment coordinator, technology teacher, Special Education Teacher Support Service (SETSS) teacher and coaches. They work with teachers to determine which standards need improvement and create a plan to relearn material and are supported by teacher leaders and an assistant principal assigned to the subject area.

- Administration, coaches and teachers meet once a week to review student data, assess progress and identify deficiencies and develop action plans. It is noted through documents that all teachers work in collaboration with the grade level leaders to assist in examining data, teacher leaders and coaches bring resources for teachers. In addition, after-school professional learning communities (PLCs) have been teacher-initiated, attended by the Special Education School Improvement Specialist (SESIS), the technology teacher and instructional coaches. iCore administrators provide feedback to teachers specifically around questioning and discussion techniques emphasizing that students have to justify their thinking around a text. The priorities addressed within the after-school PLCs include: increasing student engagement, differentiation, higher-order questioning and thinking skills, utilizing professional resources provided by the technology and SESIS support staff.
Findings

Teachers consistently examine data and student work with inquiry-based teams and professional collaborations that promote the implementation of the Common Core learning Standards and the instructional shifts. Distributive leadership structures are in place.

Impact

The work of teacher teams has resulted in progress in improving pedagogy. Teachers share leadership structures; the administration provides a means for teachers to have input on key decisions about curricula and teaching practices and build capacity to improve student learning across the school.

Supporting Evidence

- Teacher teams meet regularly, at least once a week, with common planning time embedded into the schedule. The teams review data and student work to determine the need for further extensions and supports, as evidenced during the teacher team meeting looking at how to teach students to understand the concept of a “main idea”. Strategies were reviewed to see what could be used as additional language prompts to help students determine the main idea of an informational text. Teachers used protocols to guide their discussion on what could be working well and what challenges they were facing. There are teacher-created item analysis templates, reflection templates, rubrics and checklists that are focused on targeted student needs. Modifications to units of study address gaps in student understanding. In math, instructional teams have implemented an additional questioning and discourse protocol upon studying specific student work.

- Teacher leaders, who represent each grade, meet weekly with the principal to discuss professional development and teacher practice. There are vertical team meetings, including all Special Education Teacher Support Service and teachers of ELLs, and they all meet regularly with the administration. Teacher professional development activities include keeping a log of the professional development, collaborative planning, lesson study and inquiry, and Measures of Student Learning related work.

- Teachers articulated that they felt empowered to have input on decisions on instructional resources, curriculum and lesson planning. They also expressed that they felt they had the freedom to explore their students’ needs and to find ways to best address them. Teacher leaders lead professional development sessions and mentor teachers, sharing in best practices. Teacher teams have worked on curriculum planning and adaptation, and in planning specific instructional strategies for professional development. They plan common assessments and both vertical and horizontal teacher rounds have informed teachers’ questioning and discussion techniques. Teams work together and share outcomes on Google Docs. Teachers stated that they worked to create protocols for English language development. Team meetings across grades determined that the embedding of academic language aims, along with content area aims, should be in all lessons. Teachers agreed that the collective efforts of teams and intervisitations have a direct impact on their approaches to instruction and fostering teacher leadership.