Quality Review Report

2016-2017

M.S. 301 Paul L. Dunbar
Junior High-Intermediate-Middle 08X301
890 Cauldwell Ave.
Bronx
NY 10456

Principal: Hesham Farid

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

Lead Reviewer: Carlos Perez
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

M.S. 301 Paul L. Dunbar 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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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>To what extent does the school...</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>1.1 Ensure engaging, rigorous, and coherent curricula in all subjects, accessible for a variety of learners and aligned to Common Core Learning Standards and/or content standards</td>
<td>Additional Finding</td>
<td>Proficient</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1.2 Develop teacher pedagogy from a coherent set of beliefs about how students learn best that is informed by the instructional shifts and Danielson Framework for Teaching, aligned to the curricula, engaging, and meets the needs of all learners so that all students produce meaningful work products</td>
<td>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 Quality Ratings continued

### School Culture

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>To what extent does the school...</th>
<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>
<td>Well Developed</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>
<td>Proficient</td>
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</tbody>
</table>

### Systems for Improvement

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>To what extent does the school...</th>
<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>
<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>Proficient</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>
<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>Additional Finding</td>
<td>Proficient</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>Proficient</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Area of Celebration

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Quality Indicator:</th>
<th>1.4 Positive Learning Environment</th>
<th>Rating:</th>
<th>Well Developed</th>
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</thead>
</table>

Findings
The culture that is evident throughout the school is highly supportive and family inclusive and is attributed to the school mantra that all students be polite, prompt, prepared, productive, and positive (Five P’s). Programs are in place that help to address the socio-emotional and academic needs of all students.

Impact
The effective social and emotional structures result in a nurturing environment where students are meaningfully involved in school decisions. There is improved attendance and impact on the adoption of personal behaviors throughout the school.

Supporting Evidence

- The schools’ Positive Behavior Intervention and Supports (PBIS) program and its five P’s, polite, prompt, prepared, productive, and positive, have helped to produce a successful learning environment focused on promoting positive student behaviors. All students know the five P’s and understand the importance it serves in creating a positive school culture. Students know that if they display any or all of the qualities of the five P’s they have an opportunity to earn cougar bucks that can be redeemed at the cougar school store. During the interview with students, the vast majority of students shared how they really like their teachers and feel supported by them. One student said, “I like the staff. If you have problems and you don’t want to tell anyone you can go to them.” Students feel as if they can go to any of their teachers when they need to talk to someone, even if they may not necessarily know them well. Students feel safe and welcomed in the school. When asked what is the one thing that they wish they could change about this school, one student replied, “I would want to change how people outside think of this school, because it is a great school.”

- Attendance is a key focus of the school this year. There is an attendance team that includes teachers and administrators. The attendance meetings are data driven and committee members look at data in order to identify attendance issues for specific students and schoolwide trends. Students that are identified as having attendance concerns are given a success mentor that will work with that student on a one-on-one basis throughout the school year. Absence on Fridays became a concern. As such, the attendance team developed School Spirit Fridays in an effort to address this issue. Themes for those days included twin day and pajama day. Additionally, when a student does not miss a day during the month of May, they will get a free ticket to attend the Rye Play Land trip. Students with the top weekly attendance receive free movie tickets and runners’ up get a class pizza party. Furthermore, there are regular attendance awards ceremonies for both parents and students when great strides are made in their daily attendance. As a result, the overall student attendance rate has been at 90 percent throughout the school year, which according to staff is a “drastic improvement” from years past.

- During the parent interview, every parent shared they feel that the school is safe and all students are treated respectfully. Parents report that there is always a presence in the hallways from teachers, administrators, and school safety officers. Parents were impressed by all adults knowing each student by name, even those students that they do not have in their classes. All parents interviewed believe that the administration and staff have made this a school students want to attend. Students are actively involved in the PBIS program, and contributed greatly to the schools Five P’s program. Additionally, students actively requested events such as the faculty basketball game, and as a result, this is now a regular part of the school calendar.
Area of Focus

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

Across classrooms, there are uneven teaching practices that allow students to express their thinking and learning which is a priority for school leadership. Teaching strategies inconsistently provide multiple entry points for all students.

Impact

Across classrooms, teachers' practices are beginning to engage all learners, including English Language Learners and students with disabilities, in challenging tasks and rigorous discussions, leading to meaningful work products.

Supporting Evidence

- School leadership believes that students learn best when involved in instruction that follows the workshop model and gives students opportunities to express their thinking either by working in pairs or groups, and engaging in discussions during lessons. In an eighth grade science lesson, students worked to identify and explain the various steps in the process of mitosis. For this lesson, students were given a candy bar and it was up to them to decide how to divide the candy bar into the correct number of pieces. Students were given opportunities to turn and talk with a partner to discuss the process they would use to divide the candy bar and the reasons for the ways in which they divided the candy. The teacher then asked members from each group to share how they decided to divide the candy bar and why. However, during a sixth grade English Language Arts (ELA) lesson, opportunities for students to share their thinking with either partners, groups or to the teacher was not in evidence, and the majority of the class lesson was spent with the teacher reading to the class.

- During a sixth grade ELA lesson, students were involved in learning the qualities of strong writing. During this lesson, students participated in a gallery walk and were given multiple opportunities to share their thoughts in writing by posting them at each station. During this lesson, all writing examples were translated in Spanish in order to allow English Language Learners (ELLs) the same opportunities to engage in the lesson. A seventh grade social studies class offered students scaffolds and visual supports, such as charts and a Venn diagram, in order for students to identify the differences and similarities between the New York State Seal and the Great Seal of the United States. However, multiple entry points such as these were limited and not seen in the other classes visited.

- Opportunities for students to engage in discussions that allow them to articulate their learning were uneven. During a sixth grade math lesson, students worked on classifying population as opposed to sample, and representative sample versus bias sample. During this lesson, students worked in groups and were given a specific question to answer. During the lesson, the students were reminded to use the anchor charts that were posted throughout the classroom and to use calculators as needed. The teacher asked questions such as, “How do you find the mode, mean, and median?” Students volunteered to answer each question, however, opportunities for students to engage in turn and talks, or group discussions to share their thinking were not observed. The lesson was teacher centered and only those students who volunteered to answer the question were selected.
Findings
Curricula are aligned to the Common Core Learning Standards and integrate the instructional shifts, most notably by incorporating text-based evidence and balancing informational literary texts throughout grades and subjects. Academic tasks emphasize rigor and higher-order skills for all students including English Language Learners and students with disabilities.

Impact
Curricular planning promotes coherence and college and career readiness. Additionally, the curricula reflects planning rigorous tasks for a diversity of learners including ELLs and students with disabilities.

Supporting Evidence

- This is the first year the curricula for all subjects and grade levels are supported by research and are aligned to the Common Core. This year the school leaders made a decision across all subject areas to focus on reading complex texts and citing text-based evidence. For example, ELA lesson plans across grade levels evidenced planning that included identifying character traits about the main characters in the text and requiring them to support their claims with textual evidence. An eighth grade science lesson addressed the academic vocabulary connected to the various stages in cell division. Students were to cite examples from their readings that explain and differentiate each stage.

- Rigorous thinking experiences for all students, including ELLs and students with disabilities, were evidenced in the plans reviewed. An eighth grade science lesson focused on cell division contained planned modifications for ELLs and students with disabilities including graphic organizers, as well as cutting out pictures for each stage and putting them in order to further support their understanding. In addition, the plan included additional time for the teacher to work with students individually who may require additional assistance while the other students worked collaboratively on specific tasks. Teachers included handouts, reading assignments and other resources that were translated into the student’s native language and offered as additional supports.

- ELA curriculum maps for all grade levels evidenced alignment to the Common Core. Planning included tasks that asked students to analyze a variety of media sources for key elements, to determine the credibility and accuracy of sources, and to read and comprehend literary nonfiction texts. The math curriculum included the infusion of academic vocabulary and supporting answers using text-based evidence. Science planning for a sixth grade lesson included areas for allowing students to generate data for alternative testing and modifications of a proposed object and allowing students to plan in order to investigate and provide evidence for the effect of specific machine, such as pulleys.
### Additional Finding

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

Teachers use rubrics and assessments that are aligned to the curricula. Common assessments such as pre- and post-unit assessments are used to monitor student progress across subjects and grade levels.

### Impact

Actionable feedback is provided to both teachers and students regarding student performance. Effective adjustments to curricula and instruction are made to meet the academic needs of all students.

### Supporting Evidence

- Teachers use rubrics available through Teachers College Reading and Writing Project (TCRWP), which are aligned to the Common Core and used as the foundation for the rubrics used in other subject areas. School leaders expect teachers to provide feedback that is strategic, actionable, timely, and clear enough that students understand it. For example, teacher feedback to a student’s poem assignment praised the student’s word choices for being able to capture emotions the student felt about soccer. The teacher also recommended that the student work on adding figurative language to help paint a mental picture. Feedback to a student’s math assignment included the teacher commending the student for completing the first problem very well and offered next steps that included the student’s checking the position of decimal points in his answer.

- The school uses pre- and post-assessments through TCRWP in order to assess students in ELA. All subject areas administer pre-tests and post-tests and use ongoing assessments throughout the year. Teachers conference regularly with students during instruction in order to gauge comprehension. In addition, teachers meet weekly in order to analyze student data and develop steps for follow-up lessons. Teacher shared how over the past year, they have had multiple opportunities to adjust lessons and unit plans based on the results of their meetings with students and their peers. Student folders across subjects are regularly reviewed to monitor progress and identify trends in student growth. The physical education teacher monitors sixth grade student progress through their FITNESSGRAM scores. Students’ FITNESSGRAM assessment data is entered online and it is used to track student progress throughout their middle school years.

- Teachers believe that feedback should be bite-sized and they pick the one or two items that need to be addressed to ensure students’ ability to follow the recommendations. Teachers shared anything that needs a bigger explanation should be done while conferencing with students in order to explain with more specific detail. Teacher feedback to a student for an informational writing assignment included a glow that commended the student for an engaging introduction that clearly explained the topic of the essay, and a grow that explained the need to summarize the information to develop a clear conclusion.
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

High expectations in alignment with the Danielson Framework for Teaching are consistently communicated to all staff through the staff handbook. School leaders and teachers regularly inform parents about the progress their children are making connected to college and career readiness.

Impact

Teachers are held accountable for meeting expectations and there is ongoing feedback to families that help them understand and monitor their child’s progress.

Supporting Evidence

- On the first day of school all staff members receive the staff handbook along with the school’s mission and vision. The handbook informs staff what is expected regarding weekly professional development (PD) times, staff attendance and punctuality, lesson plans, hallway bulletin boards, staff emails, and teacher mailboxes. In addition, a copy of the school calendar is included in the handbook that outlines school closings, parent teacher conferences, and other important dates that all staff members need to know. There is a detailed section that reviews the Danielson Framework for Teaching, along with all of the “Groups’ Norms for Successful Meetings” that all staff members are expected to follow for all of the meetings and conferences throughout the year. During the teacher meeting, teachers shared how they are always fully aware as to what is expected of them, and what is taking place in their school on a daily basis.

- The school uses a variety of means to communicate with parents. They have recently invested in an online grade book where students and parents monitor student progress. The school has a practice of calling all parents personally in order to remind them of the parent teacher conferences that are scheduled throughout the year. The call log for parent teacher night indicated that every parent was called and invited either by speaking to them directly or leaving a voicemail message. In addition, many teachers use an online phone application, send text messages, or hold personal conversations when students are dropped off or picked up from the school in the morning or afternoon. This year the school held a parent holiday party and used this as an additional opportunity to speak with parents and inform them of upcoming events and provided them with their child’s progress report. During the parent meeting, parents shared that are fully aware and understand the progress their children are making. Many parents stated that over the past year, this communication has improved vastly.

- Shared accountability includes professional development sessions that are developed and led by teachers. Teachers are expected to incorporate their learning from PD sessions into their class lessons. School leadership and teachers work together to define high expectations for all aspects of the school’s learning environments. It is expected that intervisitations be held among teachers to provide each other feedback regarding the expectations for classroom environments and pedagogical practice.
**Additional Finding**

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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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**Findings**

Teachers are engaged in formal inquiry-based teacher meetings that strengthen collaboration across classrooms. Teachers are taking on leadership roles through the distributive leadership opportunities available in the school.

**Impact**

Teacher’s instructional capacity is supported and there is a sense of shared leadership throughout the school that focuses on improving student learning.

**Supporting Evidence**

- During the teacher team meeting, the ELA team followed an inquiry-based protocol in order to analyze five samples of student work focused on argumentative essays at various skill levels. The meeting facilitator reminded the teachers of the procedures for the meeting. Student’s names were not used, but rather each piece was given a number. Teachers were given 10 minutes to review the work and monitored by the group’s timekeeper. Teachers then shared their thoughts using what they noticed about the work, and what they wondered about it. The teacher that provided the student work took copious notes and asked follow up questions. A variety of strategies were shared to assist students with their writing, such as, using graphic organizers, sentence starters and visual cues to help with student creativity during the writing process. The meeting ended with the group deciding which instructional strategies would be tested over the next week in order to address the student deficiencies and which teacher would present student work for the next meeting.

- There is an expectation that any time a teacher attends any professional learning opportunity on and off campus, that they then turnkey their learning to colleagues. For example, this year teachers visited other schools and observed the use of technology being implemented. As a result of these visits, document cameras are now being implemented and utilized throughout the school. Teachers are enthusiastic and eager to learn as much as possible and then share with their colleagues. Teachers have taken on leadership roles in analyzing and gathering relevant data and with the school’s Positive Behavior Intervention and Supports (PBIS) program. Both teachers and school leaders shared how “teacher growth and teacher empowerment” is what their school is all about.

- School leaders believe teacher teamwork has had a positive impact and is invaluable. Teacher collaboration has improved teachers’ understanding of the curriculum. Most notably, they have a sense of ownership since they developed unit and daily plans. School leaders observe team meetings and note the growth the teachers exhibit as evidenced in the depth of their discussions. One school leader stated, “It’s great to see a teacher who may have struggled in the past become successful at their craft.” Their working together has led to teachers engaging in classroom intervisitations. Teachers feel comfortable in visiting each other and discussing which pedagogical practices they feel would help improve student learning.