Quality Review Report

2016-2017

Fairmont Neighborhood School
Elementary 12X314
1550 Vyse Ave.
Bronx
NY 10460

Principal: Scott Wolfson

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

Lead Reviewer: Daisy Concepcion
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

Fairmont Neighborhood School serves students in grade K through grade 5. 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>To what extent does the school...</td>
<td>Additional Finding</td>
<td>Proficient</td>
</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>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>Developing</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>Additional Finding</td>
<td>Developing</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>Developing</td>
</tr>
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</table>

#### Systems for Improvement

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>To what extent does the school...</th>
<th>Area</th>
<th>Rating</th>
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</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>Area of Celebration</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>Developing</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
## Area of Celebration

<table>
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<tr>
<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

Teachers across grades and subjects are involved in inquiry-based professional collaborations. Distributive leadership structures are in place through teacher leaders who support their colleagues.

### Impact

Structured inquiry is aligned to the school goal of strengthening teachers’ instructional capacity. There is a cadre of teacher leaders who promote teacher leadership and ensure that teachers have voice in key decisions that affect student learning.

### Supporting Evidence

- In a teacher team meeting, teachers analyzed student essays for the use of transitions and the use of evidence. While the teachers noticed a more pronounced use of transition in student work, they also remarked that the essays felt very structured and formulaic. During this session, the teachers wondered how to ensure that student writing had more voice. They decided that in order to have students write in a more fluid fashion, they would include more mentor texts that would allow students to be exposed to different styles of writing and capture this on anchor charts. Teachers stated that inquiry work like this has helped them understand how to support students with using evidence to support their argument. A review of teacher team notes indicates that teachers are involved in inquiry focused on the use of evidence in writing and on word problems in math.

- The school has three grade leaders who sit in on instructional cabinet meetings. Grade leaders represent teacher thinking in cabinet meetings and turnkey findings from inquiry back to the instructional cabinet. In a series of emails between teachers and grade leaders, teachers requested more frequent informal walks using two of the school tools: The Classroom Walkthrough Environmental Checklist and the Class Walkthrough Instructional Checklist. Teachers also requested that these checklists be refined to provide more targeted feedback. In a teacher team meeting, teachers shared that the modifications to these two tools have provided them with both the clarity and detail needed for them to make improvements in their classrooms. In addition to providing colleagues with informal feedback aligned to the school goals, grade leaders support their colleagues through planning, modeling and co-teaching. They also analyze student work vertically for groups of students. One grade leader looks at student work for English Language Learners across grades; another grade leader focuses on the work of students with disabilities across grades with a focus on how the writing curriculum is aligned to individualized learning programs for students.

- There is a professional development (PD) committee in place, which informs decisions about the professional development offerings. The PD committee uses teacher input from teacher surveys as well as discussion with grade leaders to create an outline for the PD plan. The PD plan is shared with the instructional cabinet and school leaders for revisions and to ensure alignment to trends determined from the observational data. Each PD cycle is then linked to a Danielson component designed to strengthen teachers’ instructional practice. A review of the professional development offerings and teacher surveys showed that teachers wanted more support using questioning and discussion techniques. This request aligns with observational data, and it also supports the school’s focus on academic conversations. Additionally, this professional development request aligns with another school goal, which is to support the speaking and listening standards that have been recently embedded in their units of study. This committee is one of the school structures that ensure that teachers have a voice in key decisions affecting student learning.
Area of Focus

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

Across classrooms teaching strategies including questioning and organizers inconsistently provide multiple entry points leading to uneven levels of student participation and thinking.

Impact

As a result, all students, including the large population of English Language Learners and students with Individualized Education Programs, are neither engaged nor yet able to demonstrate higher-order thinking as evidenced by class discussion and student work products.

Supporting Evidence

- In a grade two science class, the teacher engaged students in a lesson on velocity and friction by setting up a small car on a ramp. While the teacher stated that she wanted students to develop a hypothesis to understand variables that affect velocity, the teacher focused the students towards the importance of “being writers.” She focused on spelling and organization rather than setting up and testing a hypothesis. While there were supports such as vocabulary banks and anchor charts, the teacher relied on grouping as the primary support for students even reminding students in the class to be mindful of the students in their group who had trouble reading. In a self-contained grade five English class for students with Individualized Educational Programs, the teacher led students in a text from a past state exam. She asked a series of low level recall questions such as, “What did Elias need help with?” and “What do you remember?” There were no supports or scaffolds for students, and during the turn and talk, students were off task thus demonstrating their inability to engage in the activity.

- Entry points into the curricula vary across classes even in the same concept on the same grade with the same population of students. This was observed in two classes on the same grade, both teaching students how to set up a data collection table. In one classroom the teacher used questioning strategies to have students think about how to best organize data bar graphs. Students set up a chart and discussed how they would multiply the unit value of each coin times the quantity to determine the total amount of money in each denomination. Each child had a small clipboard and discussed strategies for solving the problem. In another class on the same topic, students were divided into two groups and sat through a completely teacher directed lesson organizing votes on each student’s favorite season. While all students in the first class were engaged and demonstrated their thinking in both product and in discussion, this was not the case in the latter class.

- In a grade three Integrated Co-Teaching math class the teacher used a chart of a supermarket display of fruits to have student understand arrays. The teacher modeled and then invited students to identify other arrays in the picture. A student came up to the interactive whiteboard and showed that there were four rows of three apples which formed an array that could be written as the equation 4x3=12. She then asked students in pairs to identify other arrays before sending students to work in clearly identified instructional groups. All students discussed their findings and were able to complete their charts and demonstrate their thinking. However, in a grade five social studies class the teacher asked students to assist in completing a chart listing what they knew, wanted to know, and wanted to learn (KWL). The only scaffold observed was a large map of the United States in the front of the room. Students did not display the background knowledge needed to complete the map and were unable to contribute. Most students had blank pages, and when asked to speak, students offered that there were fifty states and that Barack Obama was president.
Findings
Unit plans demonstrate that school leaders and faculty ensure that curricula are aligned to the Common Core Learning Standards and integrate the instructional shifts. Curricula and academic tasks emphasize rigorous habits.

Impact
School leaders made purposeful decisions to combine common core aligned programs in both English and math in order to promote college and career readiness. Tasks and curricula consistently emphasize higher order thinking skills for all learners.

Supporting Evidence

- A review of the English Language Arts curriculum shows a series of units for each grade that focus on students reading a balance of both fiction and non-fiction with an emphasis on close reading and annotation of texts. Students are engaged in texts across all genres, and these genres also connect students to disciplinary units. A third grade unit focuses on writing like a scientist and focuses students on setting up an observational notebook and writing a lab report. Writing is primarily explanatory or informational writing as well as opinion and argument writing, which are the foundational writing skills required for career and college writing. Students are also required to go through the writing process by drafting, editing, revising, and producing a final draft.

- Math units demonstrate that student engage in common core aligned mathematics that include math practices, such as modeling with math, which is clearly displayed in units such as the fraction unit where students need to understand whole-to-part relations. In units, this modeling is tied to the strategy of visualization to identify patterns to understand the structure of math. Units also show the use of strategies to solve multi-step word problems. Access to tasks for learners includes, math videos, online supplemental curriculum materials, cooperative grouping, and the use of math terminology and manipulatives.

- Tasks in the curriculum reflect higher-order thinking and access for a variety of students. In reading informational texts student are asked to read closely to determine what the text says explicitly, to make logical inferences from it, and to cite textual evidence from the texts to support conclusions and assertions. In fictional reading, students analyze the development of the main idea of the text to determine center themes. Unit plans reflect and infuse listening and speaking standards for English Language Learners and reflect accommodations for student with disabilities including large print, sequence cards, picture supports, organizers, and a range of questions across the Webb’s Depth of Knowledge continuum. Mathematics tasks focus on problem solving and on students’ understanding both procedural and conceptual knowledge. Tasks revolve around essential questions such as “Why is it important for mathematicians to determine the difference between important and unimportant information?” Tasks immerse students in word problems and ask students to analyze relations between operations such as addition and subtraction. Additionally students are required to demonstrate their understanding in more than one way.
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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Findings

Across classrooms, teachers' practices include rubrics that are loosely aligned to the school's curricula and an inconsistent use of ongoing checks for understanding. The school is developing their use of common assessments.

Impact

Students receive limited feedback on achievement, and teachers inconsistently make effective adjustments to meet students' learning needs. Common assessments are in place, but the results are inconsistently used to adjust instruction.

Supporting Evidence

- There are various rubrics used in the school. Some of these rubrics are aligned to the school curriculum, and some are not. There does not appear to be a uniform practice about providing rubric-based feedback to students. In English Language Arts, teachers use a progression rubric that allows teachers to give students a score on every criterion. The rubric yields scores, but no written feedback on next steps. Other rubrics provide students with words of encouragement, such as “Good Job!” and others focus on grammar and punctuation only. Regardless of approach, these rubrics result in limited feedback to students. In one student meeting, students stated that they do not consistently receive feedback, and when they do, it does not provide them with details and clarity for their next steps. Several English Language Learners stated that they could not use feedback that they do not understand and asked if it were possible to have a teacher who speaks Spanish help them understand what they need to do. In speaking about next steps, an English proficient student stated that much of the feedback that they get is just the teacher telling them that they have to improve. He stated, “The teachers tell us that we need to get better, or we will get left back. I don’t think that the teachers understand that we don’t know what we need to do to understand the work.”

- The school uses an online program for common assessments and running records. A review of the online program shows that in reading and in math, there has been a decline in students in Tier 2 or the middle when compared to the October baseline. A closer look at the data shows that this decline is not due to improvement, but rather the fact that students have dropped to Tier 1 or have fallen further behind despite participating in targeted intervention. This trend was more pronounced in the running record data with students falling behind various reading levels. While school leaders stated that they had made adjustments in response to the results of common assessments through conferencing, notes from the reading conferences that did not reflect an adjustment. Moreover, conferencing notes were one or two anecdotal sentences such as, “Try two ways” with no further elaborations. There was no evidence provided to demonstrate that conferences adjusted to address common assessment findings or had resulted in any other curricular and instructional change.

- In one math class, the teacher looked at the small clipboard demonstrating student computation in order to make adjustments to her lesson. In another math class the teacher posted data-based instructional groups on the board, but these are exceptions not the rule. In seven of nine classrooms visited, checks for understanding were limited, and, where they were employed, they were primarily thumbs-up for agreement and did not result in adjustments. This practice requires students to self-identify, and as it is not a targeted assessment. These practiced do not allow the teacher to measure understanding, assess the ability to apply a standard or a skill, or to uncover a student misconception. Another assessment used is turn and talk, but teachers only listened to the students sitting near their feet and then took no notes on what students were saying.
Additional Finding

<table>
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<tr>
<th>Quality Indicator:</th>
<th>3.4 High Expectations</th>
<th>Rating:</th>
<th>Developing</th>
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Findings

School leaders are developing consistent communication with parents connected to a path to college and career readiness and student progress. Teacher teams and staff are beginning to establish a culture of high expectations for all students.

Impact

While parents receive some information regarding student progress towards academic expectations, it is not consistent and does not provide parents with ongoing feedback. Students receive advisement, however, it does not yet prepare them for their next educational level.

Supporting Evidence

- In a meeting with parents, they spoke with detail about running records assessment data citing their students’ levels. Parents’ confirmation of student conferencing affirms that parents receive ongoing feedback. Parents also knew that students were not making progress on running records, and in fact, students were falling behind. Four out of the six parents in the meeting stated that their child had lost at least one proficiency level in their running record performance. Parents felt that there was an instructional gap between the high expectations communicated to them and the gains in student performance. They stated the need for consistent student performance data that provides them with an early warning of student decline in progress. They also want workshops to gain a better understanding of school assessments such as running records. While parents acknowledge the online grading book, they described inconsistencies in capturing real-time student achievement data citing the fact that many teachers did not update the system. Currently parents feel that they have little to no information about student progress and learn about student achievement primarily when their student fails a class or is identified as a holdover.

- While parents stated that the school provides progress reports, they stated that this report is number-based, and it does not provide them with a sense of what a student is struggling with and what they need to work on to improve. Parents stated that during conferences with teachers, the school strongly encourages parents to send students to the school’s after-school intervention program. While parents feel that they receive information about these intervention services, they voiced concerns about the effectiveness of these services stating that students do not make academic progress as a result of these services. Moreover, parents questioned the alignment of these intervention services to the regular instruction in the classroom as students continued to fall behind despite attendance in these services. All parents shared a concern with the continual decline in progress for students who were English Language Learners. Parents shared that there are no scaffolds in classrooms for these students, and as a result, many students do not acquire the English language despite being in the school for years.

- In a meeting with students, they shared that there is little information available to them about high expectations for their work in their present grade or their next step. Students stated that while teachers communicate high expectations, very few teachers made connections between what students were presently learning and the next grade or middle school. Additionally, students stated that while they received an application for middle school, there is little information about what the expectations are in middle school or what middle school is like. The only students who spoke about middle school were the ones with siblings in middle school. Overall, students felt unprepared for this transition citing their poor grades and test scores as proof.
Additional Finding

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

Findings

School leaders provide teachers with feedback that accurately captures their strengths and next steps and that is explicitly aligned to the Danielson Framework for Teaching. School leaders have an effective system that uses teacher observation to design professional development.

Impact

Feedback to teachers is detailed and articulates clear expectations for teacher practice. School leaders and the instructional cabinet review observational data to develop professional development to support teacher development.

Supporting Evidence

- A review of teacher observations revealed that the school leader clearly captures both strong and developing teacher practices using low inference information and analysis of student work in order to provide teachers with clear expectations for their next steps. In most of the observations, the school leader ties the feedback to the school’s instructional focus and to the professional development that was provided to support this expectation. In one observation, the principal highlighted designing coherent instruction as the focus and shared a rationale with the teacher after his observations that there no differentiation seen for a task that represented a “moderate cognitive challenge.” Furthermore, he pointed out that while students were grouped, it was unclear as to how their groups were determined thereby causing him to question how the materials supported the instructional outcomes. The feedback references a domain in the Danielson Framework for Teaching and outlines expectations for lesson planning, assessment and student engagement, connects to past professional development activities, an article, online videos, and suggests that the teacher meet with a coach for one-on-one support in implementing the recommendations.

- Observational feedback from the school leader encourages managing student behaviors, professional growth and pushes teachers to focus on increasing rigor in the classroom. They also ask teachers to make assessment criteria clear to students and to use data to differentiate and meet student learning needs. The school leader uses data to support the feedback. In one observation the school leader questioned the alignment between the teaching point and student needs stating that students’ online assessment showed that students in one group were “reading significantly below grade level” before making recommendations on lesson planning to meet student data. Feedback across observations shows clear expectations and establishes a time frame for improvement.

- A review of instructional cabinet meeting notes shows that the school leader meets frequently with grade leaders to review patterns and trends in teacher observations. This information is shared with the professional development committee who serves as a steering committee for the development of learning opportunities for teachers. A review of both teacher observational data and the school’s professional development plan evidences clear alignment and demonstrates that there is an effective system in place for using trends from teacher observation to design and facilitate professional development. Additionally, teacher observational data is aligned to the school instructional focus and to teacher requests for professional development to support their next steps. In a teacher meeting, teachers shared that school leaders and grade leaders share observation trends with them and that they use feedback from these observations to request support from grade leaders who serve as coaches. A review of coaching logs shows that coaches meet with teachers to provide one-on-one support aligned to their teacher observations.