Quality Review Report

2016-2017

Elementary School for Math, Science, and Technology

Elementary 10X382

125 East 181st St.
Bronx
NY 10453

Principal: Avon Connell Cowell

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


School Quality Ratings

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Instructional Core</th>
<th>Area</th>
<th>Rating</th>
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<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>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>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>Area of Celebration</td>
<td>Proficient</td>
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### School Culture

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

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Area</th>
<th>Rating</th>
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<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>
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### Systems for Improvement

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

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<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>
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<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>
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<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>
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<tr>
<td>4.2 Engage in structured professional collaborations on teams using an inquiry approach that promotes shared leadership and focuses on improved student learning</td>
<td>Additional Finding</td>
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<tr>
<td>5.1 Evaluate the quality of school-level decisions, making adjustments as needed to increase the coherence of policies and practices across the school, with particular attention to the CCLS</td>
<td>Additional Finding</td>
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### Area of Celebration

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

Teachers’ assessment practices are aligned with the school’s curricula and consistently reflect the use of checks for understanding.

#### Impact

Teachers check for understanding to meet the needs of all learners. Feedback provided to students is actionable but does not yet offer a clear portrait of mastery.

#### Supporting Evidence

- Teachers use rubrics aligned to the curricula, such as the Generation Ready and the Measures of Student Learning rubric, to assess writing and the kid friendly exemplar rubric to assess mathematics. Most of the student work was assessed using a rubric. In the student group meeting, all students attested that teachers, as well as the students, use rubrics to assess their work and provide feedback with next steps. A sample of student work included feedback that commended a student on their introduction of an essay for being direct and engaging. The next steps noted that the student needed to elaborate more on their reasoning. Another sample of student work noted that the student used the proper thinking map, a tree map for their math problem. In addition, the student was commended for annotating the problem and drawing a picture to deconstruct the problem. The feedback provided to the student cited that their explanation needed to be written more clearly. While feedback provided to students is actionable, it does not provide a clear portrait of mastery.

- The school adopted the use of the self-assessment card (SAC) for teachers to check for understanding, as well as a self-monitoring tool for students to use. The cards have statements that denote if a student needs support or not, as well as, agrees or disagrees with a statement. In a math class with a diverse group of learners, students who needed help indicated so using their SAC cards and the teacher went over and conferenced with a student. A question posed included, “What important information will help solve this problem?” In another mathematics class, students were using the exemplar math rubric to self-assess themselves. The teacher conferences with the students and asked a question related to the rubric such as, “If they were an expert based on the rubric, how would they know?” Students responded by stating their work was checked twice. In another math class with diverse learners, the teachers were circulating around the room and conferencing with the student groups. The teacher asked the group, “How do we know the important information?” “How do I make that decision?” A student responded, “Only if it can help you solve the problem.” Although students are engaging in self-assessments in most classrooms, this was not evidenced in most of the classrooms.

- Teachers checked for understanding by using strategies such as thumbs up or down, cold calling students, questioning for understanding, and conferencing with the students. In an English Language Arts (ELA) class, the teacher was conferencing with different student groups. The feedback provided to one group directed them to form an opinion and to find evidence from the article to support their opinion. In another ELA class with diverse learners, students responded to a prompt using the turn and talk discussion strategy. The teacher listened to the students’ conversations around the idiomatic expression, “A fish out of water.” The teacher asked a student pair, “When were you uncomfortable?” A student provided a personal account that related to feeling like a fish out of water.
Area of Focus

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

Teaching strategies consistently offer multiple entry points into the curricula. Across classrooms, rubrics and assessments provide feedback on students.

Impact

Diverse learners have access to challenging and higher-order tasks. Student thinking is made visible through high levels of student participation.

Supporting Evidence

- The teaching strategies consistently provide multiple entry points into the curricula. For example, in an ELA Integrated Co-teaching (ICT) class, the lesson’s objective stated, “Does the understanding the vocabulary words help you better understand the events of the passage?” The students groups read the same passage, but each group focused on different components of the questions related to the passage and conducted a different activity centered on the questions. For example, the teacher read a paragraph to a group of students and asked questions such as, “What is this paragraph about?” “How are their penguin bodies? What about their body helps them survive?” One group discussed the personal care the penguins provide for their eggs. In an English as a New Language (ENL) ELA class, students were tasked with discerning the difference between the literal and figurative meaning of idioms. Direct and explicit instruction explained this concept of language. Students were provided the idiomatic expressions, “It’s raining cats and dogs,” as well as visuals depicting the literal meaning of the idiom. A question posed to the students was, “Who can tell me what the figurative language meaning is?” Students were provided a graphic organizer and charted the literal and figurative meanings of idiomatic expressions such as, “Ants in your pants.” There were missed opportunities for extensions for the highest performers to access the curricula.

- In an ICT math class, students were grouped by ability and used manipulatives that represented money to access the curricula to answer the essential question, “What can you buy from the store with less than one dollar?” Students used a scaffold to show how they were going to spend their money. In addition, there were scaffolds posted around the room to support students during the activity. The teacher posed questions such as “How do I know you spent that?” “Does that show me how you got that?” Some groups demonstrated productive struggle as they decided how they were going to spend their money. In an ELA class, students were differentiated by their reading levels and assigned texts. In their groups, student discussions were centered on supporting their opinions by using facts from the article and their prior knowledge. Scaffolds were again posted to support the students during the activity. Although the tasks were differentiated, there were missed opportunities for the highest performers to access the curricula.

- Student work and discussions reflected high levels of student thinking and participation. In a math class, student groups were solving a word problem. Students deconstructed the problem and using their choice of the appropriate thinking map, they mapped what information was or was not important in solving the problem. Students explained to one another their process for solving the problem. Student work products demonstrated their problem solving process making their thinking visible. In a math class with diverse learners, student groups were solving a math problem, selected the proper thinking map to deconstruct the problem, and collaboratively discerned which information was pertinent or not in solving the problem. Students’ devised steps to solve the problem.
Additional Finding

Quality Indicator: 1.1 Curriculum
Rating: Proficient

Findings
Curricula are aligned to the Common Core Learning Standards, integrate the instructional shifts, and consistently emphasize higher-order thinking skills and rigor.

Impact
Content standards are aligned to the Common Core Learning Standards, integrate rigorous tasks for all learners, and builds coherence, thus promoting college and career readiness for all students.

Supporting Evidence

- Curricula and academic tasks consistently emphasize higher-order thinking skills and rigor across grades and subject. For example, during the informational writing and reading unit, a social studies task asks students to write an article that educates readers on the causes of the American Revolution. Students are to use thinking maps to assist them in writing the article and use quotes, data, and facts from their research in their writing. In an ELA unit plan, students are tasked with investigating poetic language and identifying the meaning of a wide range of poetry. Students analyze poetry for rhythm, rhyme, and imagery. As a culminating task, students will write and present their poem. In an ELA lesson plan, students will compare and contrast the upbringing of boys versus girls in Colonial America. The skill of annotation is introduced to engage with the text, “Heading West: Learn about a Pioneer’s Life” and to demonstrate their thinking skills. Students will also use the appropriate thinking map in order to organize their ideas and counterpoints. Instruction is scaffolded so that all learners have access to the tasks.

- In a science lesson plan, students will investigate and discern the relationship between energy and power. Students will apply the concepts of energy and power to design a small town that uses either hydroelectric, geothermal, solar, or wind power and illustrate how the power source is converted to electrical energy to power homes and businesses. Lesson plans indicate differentiation by incorporating visual representations, tactile, and kinesthetic modifications in order for all students to have access to the task. In an ELA unit, students are to write an essay responding to a prompt regarding the Colonial period about the life of children during that time. The prompt stated, “What are the similarities and differences between white and black kids’ lives during that period?” Supports included levels texts to match the leaners’ needs.

- School leaders ensure that curricula are aligned to the Common Core Learning Standards, and integrate the instructional shifts to build coherence and promote college and career readiness. A review of unit plans shows alignment to the Common Core Learning Standards. Units are organized by big ideas/enduring understandings, essential questions, content, skill, accommodations for diverse learners, and formative assessments. A fourth grade ELA unit plan requires students to cite textual evidence while drawing inferences and determine the main idea and explain how it is supported by details. Students are tasked with writing an opinion piece entitled, “School Uniforms: Awesome – or Awful?” Students are to support their opinions with supporting reasons and information. In a second grade ELA unit plan, students are tasked with writing an opinion piece about a character from a Dr. Seuss text. Students are required to provide their opinion about the character’s behavior and provide the character with advice.
Additional Finding

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<tr>
<th>Quality Indicator:</th>
<th>3.4 High Expectations</th>
<th>Rating:</th>
<th>Proficient</th>
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Findings
School leaders and staff consistently communicate high expectations to the school community that conveys expectations for instruction, professionalism, and is connected to a path to college and career readiness.

Impact
School leadership consistently conveys expectations to the entire staff, provides training, and holds the staff accountable. The school community offers ongoing feedback to families and helps families understand student progress toward those expectations.

Supporting Evidence

- School leaders articulate high expectations to the staff on instruction, professionalism, and communication and provide accountability for those expectations through written messages such as the Weekly Update about schoolwide events, changes in the schedule, and the expectations for the following week. Expectations about classroom environments, teachers’ data binders, and lesson plan templates using the Shelter Instruction Observation Protocol (SIOP), unit plans, and bulletin boards are messaged to the staff and encompass feedback. The staff collaborated with one another in creating the norms for professional learning.

- During the teacher meetings, teachers shared that all members of the staff collaborated with one another on the creation of the school’s mission and vision statements, as well as the learning that transpired while developing the statements. In addition, teachers shared that they conduct peer intervisitations with one another. After the intervisitations, the principal mentioned that the teachers use the resource entitled, “The Framework for Teaching: Six Clusters Supporting High Level Learning” and “Learning-focused Conversations: Assessing Developing Professional Practice” and also use the Framework for Teaching as a tool to observe their colleagues and provide developmental feedback to them as well. Teachers have been provided with professional development on topics such as scaffolding instruction for English Language Learners (ELLs), a series of workshops on the implementation of Thinking Map into instruction, and applying visible learning strategies for literacy instruction. A system of accountability for those expectations is attained through practices such as Teachers of Training, who received training on the usage of Thinking Maps to support their colleagues. A teacher stated that the strategies learned in professional development are observed while teachers conduct intervisitations of one another and complete reflection sheets on their experiences.

- School leaders and staff consistently communicate expectations to the families that are connected to college and career readiness through back to school night events, weekly parent letters, phone calls to the home, a family handbook, interim progress reports, report cards, parent teacher conferences, annual Individualized Education Program (IEP) review meetings, promotion in doubt letters, and Class Dojo. There are weekly parent engagement meetings in which parents can learn about their child’s academic progress. Parents also have the opportunity to attend workshops provided by the school during parent engagement topics on myON, Math Mats, and Thinking Maps to support their child’s learning in the home. There are publishing parties where parents are invited to witness their child showcasing their work.
### Additional Finding

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

**Findings**

School leaders provide feedback to teachers that accurately captures strengths, challenges, and next steps through cycles of classroom observations using the Danielson *Framework for Teaching*.

**Impact**

Feedback to teachers articulates clear expectations for teacher practice and supports teacher development based on classroom observations and analysis of student work/data.

**Supporting Evidence**

- Administration regularly looks at student work products and assessment results as a way to gauge help for teachers to grow in targeted domains of the Danielson *Framework for Teaching*. To achieve this, verbal feedback is provided to the teacher on the next day after the observation and written feedback is provided shortly thereafter. For example, in one observation report, the school leader shared that the learning tasks/activities were poorly aligned with the instructional outcomes and that scaffolds for ELLs were not utilized. The next step outlined for the teacher to incorporate into their practice, specifically for the ELL students, is to include scaffolds by providing direct modeling. Scaffolds, such as sentence frames and providing students the opportunity to practice their responses orally prior to writing, will help to develop students’ oral language, was also recommended. In another observation report, the administrator cited a student’s reading level. The feedback recommended the use of a thinking map to provide the student an opportunity to compare and/or contrast characters in a book.

- Administrators’ feedback to teachers is aligned to Danielson *Framework for Teaching* and includes clear expectations, captures strengths, challenges, helps teachers improve their practice, and provides supports to encourage and help them make needed improvements. For example, a sample observation report recommended that the teacher use academic vocabulary during instruction and to incorporate appropriate scaffolds for the lesson to allow ELL students to access the task. Subsequently, a follow-up observation was conducted and the feedback directed the teacher to provide model sentences in English demonstrating proper punctuation and syntax, intervisitation with a colleague to work on planning. It was noted in the report that the teacher receives consistent support in the area of effective lesson planning. In another observation report, the feedback to the teacher needed to check for understanding, consistently, in the lesson. To support the teacher, the recommendation was to use the school’s self-assessment card system often, so that students can self-monitor and demonstrate if additional help is needed during the lesson.

- Feedback to the teachers clearly articulates strengths, challenges and next steps to help teachers improve their practice. A sample observation report noted that a teacher was exhibiting a challenge in designing coherent instruction. The feedback noted that the teacher needed to model for the students how to extrapolate information from a student generated Thinking Map to create a letter. The following observation report cited an improvement in this area for the teacher and noted that the teacher attended professional learning, and seeks frequent feedback from colleagues to better his/her practice. Because of this support, the teacher improved in designing coherent instruction.
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
Most of the teachers are engaged in structured, inquiry based professional collaborations. Teachers consistently analyze assessment data and student work for students they share.

Impact
Teacher engage in professional collaborations that strengthen their instructional capacity. Teacher teams analyze assessment data and student work typically resulting in improved teacher practice and progress towards goals for groups of students.

Supporting Evidence

- Teachers engage in weekly inquiry-based professional collaborations during formal grade teams or in grade bands as well as informally daily. Teachers review and adjust curricula, analyze students’ work samples to ensure alignment to the Common Core Learning Standards and incorporate the instructional shifts. During a teacher meeting, teachers stated that the work of teacher teams has fostered intervisitation among teachers to provide one another feedback across grades and content areas. Teachers also mentioned that teacher teams have improved instructional coherence across the grades and promoted a process of inquiry by asking one another questions and sharing ideas with each other.

- A kindergarten through second grade band was observed conducting a teacher team meeting about the implementation of the Blast Foundations phonics program. Teachers discussed what aspects of the program were successful in their classes and they described the instructional strategies used while implementing the program and the modifications made to their lessons using Blast. The meeting’s facilitator showed the team a videotaped lesson demonstrating long vowel sounds. Teachers stated that the video helped to clarify any misconceptions they had. The teachers noted the next steps for the implementation of the program required technology training and they expressed lesson pacing concerns.

- Grade teams analyze student assessment data, make observations, note trends, patterns, and utilize the data to differentiate lessons, and determine target population of students in need of Response to Intervention (RTI) supports. Fountas and Pinnell assessment data was analyzed for a fifth grade class. Students groups were differentiated by their reading levels and the teachers devised a plan for guided reading/small group instruction. The teachers made observations of the reading strategies used and noted that all students are attempting unknown words and noted that students are using three distinct strategies to figure out unknown words. A myriad of methods were identified to support the students such as, read alouds, vocabulary lists, using students’ prior knowledge, and using Thinking Maps for students to recall events from the text. A second-grade class of student work was analyzed. The expectations for the task were for students to use operations to solve the problems, communicate their process using words, numbers, and pictures and to determine the difference between numbers. The student performance was categorized as either below, approaching, meeting and/or exceeding the standard. Teachers noted supports the students needed such as extra practice modeling in addition and subtraction using manipulatives.