Quality Review Report

2017-2018

M.S. 51 William Alexander
Junior High-Intermediate-Middle 15K051
350 5 Avenue
Brooklyn
NY 11215

Principal: Lenore Dileo Berner

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

Lead Reviewer: Marion Wilson
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. 51 William Alexander 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><strong>To what extent does the school...</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></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>Additional Finding</td>
<td>Proficient</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2.2 Align assessments to curricula, use on-going assessment and grading practices, and analyze information on student learning outcomes to adjust instructional decisions at the team and classroom levels</td>
<td>Additional Finding</td>
<td>Proficient</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
## School 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>Proficient</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>Area of Celebration</td>
<td>Well Developed</td>
</tr>
</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>Well Developed</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>Well Developed</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>Area of Focus</td>
<td>Proficient</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Area of Celebration

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Quality Indicator:</th>
<th>3.4 High Expectations</th>
<th>Rating:</th>
<th>Well Developed</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>

Findings

There are elevated and clear expectations about pedagogical practices for all pedagogical staff consistently communicated by school leaders. Teacher teams and staff establish a culture for learning that systematically communicates high expectations for all students.

Impact

Cooperatively, both teachers and school leaders cultivate a culture of mutual accountability for the school's high expectations for which training and support is offered. Through the strategic messaging of high expectations via the school's in-depth arts programs, students own their educational experiences and are successful in gaining acceptance into specialized high schools across New York City.

Supporting Evidence

- Collectively, school leaders and staff believe that students learn best through lessons that are student-centered, inquiry-based approach, and allow for ample student discourse including questioning and application of skills across subject areas. School leaders work with staff to ensure that these elevated expectations are the faculty dashboard which posts the weekly newsletter from school leaders, professional development calendar, and staff handbook. Teachers commented that they receive consistent verbal messages and face-to-face conversations foster a culture where teachers hold themselves and each other accountable. For example, the school leader shared the work of a group of teachers regarding the principles of students adopting a growth mindset and how they turnedkeyed the information to their colleagues without being told to do so. This type of initiative to support and hold themselves and each other accountable was evident when speaking to both teachers and administrators. Teachers also take their professional responsibility for maintaining accurate records, seeking outside assistance to ensure they are meeting the school's expectations as it relates to effective and highly effective teaching practices.

- The vast majority of students have opportunities to take Regents level, advanced, and arts related courses and are demonstrating mastery in these areas. During the small group meeting, students shared that they meet regularly with teachers to document evidence to support interviews or pursuing careers in their desired fields. One student remarked that his teacher helps him with the use of rubrics to discern which photographs to present on an upcoming interview to a specialized high school. Other students could share their profound experiences with their dance, foreign language, music, or art teacher to make connections to real life learning that will help them in high school, college, and beyond.

- The school provides professional development to staff that focus on key elements of the Danielson Framework for Teaching to ensure that all stakeholders consistently reflect high expectations. Staff work together in study groups, planning sessions, and other professional collaborations to ensure that there is a high level of success in teaching and learning across the school. Teachers participate in book studies and work in partnership with administration to ensure that there are coordinated supports and an embedded mutual accountability system to achieve clearly articulated expectations for professional practice.
Area of Focus

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Quality Indicator:</th>
<th>5.1 Monitoring and Revising Systems</th>
<th>Rating:</th>
<th>Proficient</th>
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</table>

Findings

The school has a process in place to evaluate and adjust school based instructional practices in response to student learning needs. School staff is not yet purposefully making strategic adjustments to elements related to the quality of school culture among school constituents.

Impact

School leaders and faculty regularly make adjustments to elements of the instructional core and the school’s culture to build coherence of policies and practices across the school with attention to the demands and rigor of the Common Core Learning Standards.

Supporting Evidence

- There is consistency in the way instructional planning documents are created and revised based on shared expectations for planning and preparation and execution of these lessons by most teachers. School staff have a built in informal structure to review the effectiveness of curricula materials, assessment tools, and teaching practices on a regular basis. Although school leaders and staff utilize data to inform adjustments being made to curricula tools and resources there were missed opportunities for a strategic alignment between these constructs across some subject areas and departments. For example, the teachers who specialize in working with students with disabilities often thoughtfully craft activities to provide appropriate scaffolds during learning activities, execute them, and assess learning for their student populations. The school continues to work on building greater alignment and coherence between what is taught and how all other teachers, including content certified staff, teach it to these student populations.

- The school’s arts program provides a preponderance of students with high expectations for their next level of education and individualized conferencing based on student art expertise and preferences. However, there were some missed opportunities for messaging so that there is greater attention paid to focusing on making purposeful adjustments to the multiple homeroom periods that are supposed to be to gauge student’s social-emotional and academic performance. However, through the analysis of qualitative data sources, there is some discrepancy in the effectiveness of this time to be used to personalize student-learning experiences for all students. For example, the school has four homeroom periods during the day to allow school staff to have informal conversations and check in with students about their day. This structure was designed to elevate the quality of elements of the school culture which are not operating at its greatest potential.

- Anecdotal evidence from school staff presented included tracking the effectiveness of the use of section sheets for classes to monitor behavior and the work in advisories is regularly monitored and reviewed by deans and counselors but is not strategically analyzed to assess the success of these school culture structures. For example, while there is evidence of success in terms of how advisories are scheduled and organized, there were missed opportunities of the effectiveness of the strategic monitoring of some systems and structures. In addition, system-wide structures for the use of homeroom time have not led to purposeful adjustments for reading silently for a period. There was a disconnect between the effectiveness of the practice with its intended impact based on these interviews and meetings. Furthermore, the school promotes academic and personal behaviors through assembly programs, verbal and written communication structures, however this message has not resulted in greater schoolwide coherence of policies and systems over time.
**Additional Finding**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Quality Indicator:</th>
<th>1.1 Curriculum</th>
<th>Rating:</th>
<th>Proficient</th>
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**Findings**

Lesson planning documents include areas to address students citing evidence to support their thinking, and Common Core, as well as content standards for most curricula documents. Most curricula and academic tasks consistently emphasize rigorous habits and elements of critical thinking across grades and subjects.

**Impact**

Written curricula documents across most grades and subjects are building coherence for what it means for a student to successfully exit a grade. Academic tasks are cognitively planned with supports for English Language Learners and students with disabilities.

**Supporting Evidence**

- Much of written curricula documents contain similar features, which highlight the Common Core and content standards for most grades and subjects. Curricula documents for the science department make purposeful connections between instructional shifts and topics within each domain and are fleshed out with great specificity and detail. While, in other subjects, there are missed opportunities for the strategic integration of the shifts for there to be a fluid coordination and connection between learning objectives, standards, and instructional practices in curricula documents. For example, in science lesson plans, there is an essential question, key academic vocabulary, real life world connections, and integration of literacy and science content standards, along with pre-planned questions. There were a few missed opportunities in other content area curricula documents to contain the same level of specificity and sequencing of units of study in a purposeful and well-coordinated manner.

- Most planning documents have learning outcomes that incorporate various outcomes including factual and procedural knowledge, conceptual understanding, thinking and reasoning skills, as well as opportunities for student collaboration. For example, written curricula documents contained primary standards, big ideas and questions, assessment of student learning, instructional tasks, and vocabulary that students will need to complete lessons. Plans asked students to write their own questions, create hypothesis, analyze data, and make inferences.

- Academic tasks are designed and organized for instructional groups to support student learning needs, especially students with disabilities and English Language Learners (ELLs). Tasks include adaptations for groups of students with supports for students being able to productively struggle through complex tasks. Tasks include learning targets that allow students to actively engage with content through activities that allow them to compare facts, analyze data, consider various perspectives, and create questions. Supports listed in documents to assist students’ complete tasks range from differentiated graphic organizers, visual display boards, dictionaries, note-taking tools, and opportunities for students to support each other.
Additional Finding

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

Most teachers implement teaching strategies that include questions and scaffolds to consistently provide multiple entry points into the curricula. The majority of students have opportunities to engage in collaborations and cooperative learning activities with their peers.

Impact

Teachers provide most students, including ELLs and students with disabilities with scaffolds and supports during lessons so they can engage in robust discussions and produce meaningful projects.

Supporting Evidence

- Teachers provide opportunities for students to be exposed to complex academic vocabulary. There are many opportunities for students to present their learning in multiple formats including written, digital, oral, individual, and group presentations demonstrating their knowledge of new concepts. Teachers encourage students to seek assistance from their groupmates to help them understand challenging concepts. In addition, there are structures in place to ensure that the timing and pacing of lessons meets students’ learning including those needing additional time, effort, or support in the completion of their work. In one Integrated Co-Teaching English Language Arts class, students were working within different strategic partnerships to utilize their synthesis of different texts to construct their online blog post. Students who completed their task early knew they had additional challenge questions to complete while waiting for others to finish. There was some inconsistency regarding strategic high quality extensions and enrichment activities for already high performing students. For example, in another ICT class, teachers primarily lectured during the class visit and did not provide the appropriate scaffolds and supports to ensure that most students were fully engaged in the social studies activity.

- The school has clearly outlined details about the expectations for the majority of students to be engaged in class activities including participating in class and group discussions, working with a partner, making presentations, and asking relevant questions. Most teachers use a variety of effective teaching techniques to engage students according to these expectations during class visits. In one mathematics class, students had several opportunities to use precise math language to deepen and extend their understanding of the target for the lesson along with addressing the essential question for the unit. Teachers create many opportunities to hear student voices, so that students can encourage collaboration and communication. For example, in Google classroom, students have access to vocabulary tools that provide definitions, pictures, and clues for unfamiliar words and terms to help them when writing and researching.

- Most students are encouraged to complete tasks with the use of a variety of visual and print aids, and can demonstrate their understanding of lessons. Activities and assignments promote learning that emphasizes depth over breadth and students must explain their thinking. For example, projects include scholarly research papers, poster board designs, and online communication blogs to demonstrate their critical thinking through a real-world applicable lens. In a social studies class, the teacher showed video excerpts, provided enlarged political and physical maps as they engaged in rotating station activities to complete the task of comparing various regions in the world. There were defined roles for students and note taking tools for them to assist each other. This was not evident across the vast majority of classes visited across subject areas.
Quality Indicator: 2.2 Assessment

Rating: Proficient

Findings
Most assessments and rubrics in various grade levels and content areas are aligned to the school’s curricula. Teachers consistently reflect on the use of ongoing checks for understanding and allow students time to self-assess their work.

Impact
Students and teachers utilize the actionable feedback from assessments and work products to inform student achievement. The majority of teachers make effective adjustments to meet all students’ learning needs during instruction.

Supporting Evidence

- Most teachers circulate throughout classes, observe student work and performance, ask questions to elicit student understanding, and provide opportunities for students to self-assess their performance. For example, across most classroom visits, teachers use the results from exit slips to then adjust the next day’s lesson plans or provide verbal feedback to students to clear up any misconceptions. There were missed opportunities for teachers to effectively monitor student engagement and understanding and ensure they were intellectually engaged in lessons before moving forward.

- Feedback from most teachers, and their peers, is accurate and specific which helps to advance student learning. Students have a general sense of what is expected of them after they complete a task or activity and how this information contributes to their overall achievement. During the small group meeting, most students shared samples of work including tests, quizzes, and research reports that contained feedback that they could demonstrate what they did well and what needed to be improved. Some students did not receive meaningful feedback, in that they were not able to read the teacher’s handwriting on their work. In this instance, students shared that teachers do give them verbal feedback on their work when they have opportunities to conference with them in most subject areas. For example, one student shared a sample feedback on a writing assignment that he wrote in response to a political cartoon that he analyzed. The handwriting was slightly illegible and the student was not able to read the feedback the teacher had written. As a result, feedback samples were not always accurate, specific, timely, and advance student learning.

- Most teachers afford students time to self-assess their work and monitor their progress during class time. Students encourage students to think about how they are approaching their work and the resulting actions. Teachers ask a myriad of different questions, encourage think-pair-shares, and arrange small group discussions to elicit student understanding and make on-the-spot adjustments when needed. However, there were missed opportunities for strategically planned effective adjustments during some class visits, which did not allow some students to be aware of their next learning steps.
Findings

Most teacher teams systematically analyze key elements of both student and teacher work and the related student assessment data for whom they share. Distributed leadership structures are embedded in the school’s day-to-day practices.

Impact

As a result of teacher leadership opportunities built into the culture of the school, teachers play an integral role in decisions that affect student learning. Teacher teams have helped teachers improve their practice and contributed to a majority of students mastering their goals.

Supporting Evidence

- Distributive teacher leadership is fully embedded in the school’s operations. During the teacher team meeting, teachers shared how they are empowered to have great influence over professional development offerings, selection, and creation of curricular materials, hosting book studies, and offering additional assistance to support students who were struggling academically with administration’s full support. Teachers and administrators shared many specific concrete examples of teacher led pilot programs, like the implementation and use of the Google platform to streamline lesson planning, as an example of how teacher leadership is embedded in the school’s culture. Teachers also have creative freedom in implementing effective instructional techniques that they feel would best suit their students’ learning needs and can spearhead programs, clubs, and activities that affect student learning in significant ways.

- Teacher teams review student completion of assignments, student progress in learning, and other instructional activities that are part of the day-to-day functions in a school setting to ensure that students are improving and demonstrating mastery in different content areas. Teachers monitor student learning through teacher-created common assessments, standardized assessment results, and other data forms to adjust curricula and instructional practices accordingly. Teachers keep track of formal assessments electronically, using spreadsheets and charts, which allows for item analysis. As a result, teachers are demonstrating growth in their ability to analyze how they collect information, plan, and execute lessons more students master content objectives and standards.

- The vast majority of teachers can share specific instances where they have spearhead activities, initiatives, or programs. During one of the teacher question-and-answer meetings, a teacher shared that administration does not dictate how teachers plan or teach lessons and gives them great latitude in making decisions that best suits the needs of their students. Overwhelming, all teachers nodded in agreement and verbally shared their consensus. For example, teachers remarked about the various arts infused programs that are offered at the school. Course offerings such as photography, theatre, visual arts, and dance for example were born out of teacher leadership structures that are embedded into the school’s daily practices. Teachers commented that as a result of effective teacher leadership, teachers are empowered to make key decisions that affect student learning across the school regarding the instructional core, school culture, and systems for improvement.