Quality Review Report

2017-2018

P.S./I.S. 137 Rachel Jean Mitchell

K-8 23K137

121 Saratoga Avenue
Brooklyn
NY 11233

Principal: Suzette Rose

Dates of Review:
March 28, 2018 - March 29, 2018

Lead Reviewer: Jennifer Eusanio
The Quality Review Report

The Quality Review is a two-day school visit by an experienced educator. During the review, the reviewer visits classrooms, talks with parents, students, teachers, and school leaders and uses a rubric to evaluate how well the school is organized to support student achievement.

The Quality Review Report provides a rating for all ten indicators of the Quality Review Rubric in three categories: Instructional Core, School Culture, and Systems for Improvement. One indicator is identified as the **Area of Celebration** to highlight an area in which the school does well to support student learning and achievement. One indicator is identified as the **Area of Focus** to highlight an area the school should work on to support student learning and achievement. The remaining indicators are identified as **Additional Finding**. This report presents written findings, impact, and site-specific supporting evidence for six indicators.

Information about the School


School Quality Ratings

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Instructional Core</th>
<th>Area</th>
<th>Rating</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>To what extent does the school...</strong></td>
<td></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>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 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>Proficient</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>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>Developing</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

| Quality Indicator | 3.4 High Expectations | Rating: Proficient |

Findings

School leaders use professional learning and written memoranda to communicate high expectations connected to the instructional focus to teachers. The staff consistently provide families with feedback on grade-level expectations to support their understanding of state standards.

Impact

Consistent communication, support, and feedback ensure the staff are held accountable in efforts to meet the schoolwide instructional goals. Parents are aware of their children's abilities to help them meet grade-level standards.

Supporting Evidence

- School leaders communicate their expectations on building rigorous discussions across classrooms through conversations at teacher team meetings, during professional learning, via instructional memoranda, as well as through the faculty handbook. The school’s Professional Learning Calendar contains several workshops on questioning and discussion and includes other related workshops such as “Developing Critical Thinkers and Strong Communicators across Content Areas” which taken together, communicate and support teachers in aligning their practices towards meeting the school goals and instructional focus. A newsletter called the Instructional Memo is provided to teachers and contains a list of the expectations for teaching and learning and other professional responsibilities. From the beginning of the year, Instructional Memos reflect school leaders' messaging on lesson plans entailing rigorous curricula and daily instruction using higher-order thinking questions to provide students opportunities to engage in meaningful discussions, as aligned to the instructional focus. Teachers reported that these structures help reinforce and support them in building their understanding of best instructional practices.

- The observation cycle is used to hold teachers accountable for implementing practices modeled for them by school leaders and discussed during professional learning. A review of observation reports reflect feedback which reinforces the expectations for best practice on student engagement, developing rigorous questions, and the use of discussion techniques. In several reports, the school leaders remind teachers to use group discussion with roles and accountable talk stem cards to foster critical thinking and foster stronger verbal responses from students, related to professional learning provided throughout the year. A review of classroom observations this year reflects increases in ratings and acknowledgement of teachers’ growing understanding of these practices.

- Parents reported that there are several structures that communicate and help them understand the shifts within the grade-level standards each year and how to support their child in meeting them. Workshops on the Common Core Learning Standards and ongoing meetings with teachers offer information on these expectations including middle school orientation workshops to ensure they understand what it means to be ready for high school. Additionally, an online grading system and phone calls from teachers, communicate to parents how their child is performing and whether they are meeting these standards. Resources including extra work and websites are shared with parents in support of their efforts to aid their child at home towards increasing their performance in school.
**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**

Teacher practices have yet to consistently reflect alignment to the school's core belief on how students learn best relative to rigorous, peer-to-peer discussion. Pedagogy inconsistently provides students with specific scaffolding as multiple entry points in challenging tasks across the curricula.

**Impact**

Practices across classes lack a cohesive approach to the school's instructional focus thus hindering student access and their ability to produce meaningful work products.

**Supporting Evidence**

- School leaders shared that the instructional focus is tied to the community’s core belief that students learn best through rigorous, evidence-based discussion throughout a lesson. Common practices that align to this belief are the use of discussion role cards which provide groups of students structured roles which encourage the use of question stem prompts to engage in conversations to support their claims and ideas. In some classes, practices were observed in alignment to this core belief. In a sixth-grade math class, students worked in groups to solve questions with equations or inequalities. Each group contained a group leader who was positioned to use prompts to encourage students to prove how they solve their problems in their oral response. At times, group leaders disagreed and used additional questions and key math vocabulary such as the word variable, to push the group’s thinking about the problem they were solving in alignment to the math instructional shifts. However, some classes did not reflect the same use of math application and vocabulary usage in relation to the instructional focus.

- In a first-grade literacy class, while working with their teacher on the sounds and meaning of words with the medial –er, some students pronounced the word and the teacher would ask the students the meaning or provide an example to help each student understand what the words meant. However, the students were not provided any opportunities for student-to-student discussion as aligned to the instructional focus. In an Integrated Co-teaching (ICT) math class, one teacher posed questions directly to students such as “Is a fraction like a whole?” and “Do you think (student) is right?” Although, the questions posed allowed for selected students to respond and explain their thinking, discussions were mainly teacher to student and for specific students, thereby, only certain students were able to demonstrate responses which aligned with instructional shifts and the use of real-world application.

- Although tools including graphic organizers and the use of questioning and prompting are strategies teachers use, in some classes, students’ responses did not reflect critical thinking or the questions posed did not consistently support students in meeting the learning outcomes of the lesson. In a third-grade literacy class, groups of students worked together to develop statements of the characters’ point of view in a text. The students used annotation strategies and a large graphic organizer to illustrate their thinking and posed questions to challenge each other’s thinking. However, in a science class, the students were using forceps to peel the outer layer of an onion to understand the concept of cell function. In groups, the students mostly worked on cause and effect and prediction questions yet their responses varied in rigor.
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**

School leaders ensure that the school’s curricula are rigorous and aligned to the Common Core Learning Standards, as well as content standards, while integrating English Language Arts (ELA) shifts relative to vocabulary across content areas and the use of real world scenarios in math.

**Impact**

Across grades and subject areas, informed decisions have led to the planning of rigorous tasks which is building coherence and promoting college and career readiness for all students.

**Supporting Evidence**

- This year, the teachers have decided to supplement their current ELA curricula with guided, online interactive program materials to reinforce standards-based planning. A focus on writing using sources and providing evidence to support claims is reflected in tasks throughout the school and connected to the school’s instructional focus to design coherent instruction to foster rigorous discussion. In addition, curricular adjustments are made to ensure students are provided tasks that build upon the foundational and listening standards through additional literacy-based materials added to the kindergarten to second-grade curricula. Taken together, the schoolwide curricula contains essential questions and tasks in each grade aligned to the Common Core Learning Standards fostering a continuum of exposure to the next-level readiness skills.

- In math and science, an emphasis on math practices to build coherence across grades and use academic vocabulary are reflected in lesson plans and tasks. In a science lesson plan, the task provides questions which reinforce the use of tier three words such as cell and organelle. A grade six lesson plan reflects a math vocabulary activity on the term equation, asking students to define the term and how it is used in the context of a phrase. Additionally, the task contains multiple opportunities for students to engage in discourse while using the term in the context of their responses while solving word problems. These types of activities are reflected in several lesson plans across grades and thus build students’ conceptual understanding of core content aligned to the standards.

- Across subject areas, lesson plans contain reasoning and critical thinking questions. In a self-contained special education lesson plan for eighth graders, students are required to read multi-leveled texts to analyze the cause and effect factors and develop claims on the relationships between characters. A third grade ELA lesson plan contains a task where students are asked to distinguish the point of view of the narrator and the author. Students are required to provide accurate explanations in their responses to support their ideas.
Additional Finding

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

Although rubrics are utilized as a means to measure student understanding, summative and benchmark assessments across grades and subject areas have yet to be consistently utilized as instruments for the determination of students’ progress.

Impact

Actionable feedback with next steps for improving student work is a promising growth practice throughout the school. Instructional adjustments based on student progress in content areas has yet to be developed.

Supporting Evidence

- Teachers use rubrics based on four-point criteria or leveled rating system consisting of the following levels: novice, apprentice, practitioner, and expert. The students are aware of the range across points and levels. One student noted that to be an expert one must demonstrate that their work is clear and focused where a novice shows that their view is not clearly developed thus requiring lots of support from their teacher. Across the school, bulletin boards and student work folders contain feedback which contains a rubric for some of the work and feedback in the form of glows and grows, also known as strengths and areas of improvement. However, strategies to inform the student’s next steps are not always provided. One work product contained a grow which stated “expand paragraphs” with no specific explanation or examples of which areas to strengthen or how to improve the essay. Comparably, feedback viewed across the school mirrored similar grows, thus limiting students’ ability to enhance the quality of their work.

- A group of students reported that most of their work contains a rubric and feedback in the form of strengths and areas of improvement. Yet, responses were mixed when requesting how they would improve their work or what strategies were provided to enhance and revise their work product. One student who received a rating of apprentice on his writing stated that he would use more details to improve his writing yet was unable to share how or what strategies he would use to revise his essay. Another student shared the grade on his math test yet was unable to determine whether it was a passing grade and when asked how he would increase his grade, was unable to provide a solution. Finally, another student was provided an essay and a score of Level 3 yet only received a compliment with a rubric and no next steps on how to revise the project to receive a Level 4, thus hindering the student’s opportunity to obtain a higher grade.

- Benchmark assessments in ELA and math are used primarily to make adjustments to instruction and support student intervention programming. From fall to winter marking periods, some progress has been made in ELA when reviewing reading-level data per class where students are moving towards meeting the grade-level text complexity expectations based on the schoolwide correlation chart. Additionally, online reading growth reports provide teachers information on student performance. Both assessments are used for adjusting small group strategy instruction and guided reading groups. In math, a review of diagnostic and interim assessment data from performance tasks shows that students are having difficulty with problem solving and understanding the key terminology in word problems. Thus, lessons have been revised to reinforce vocabulary in math and use the circle, underline, box, eliminate, and solve (CUBES) strategy to support problem solving. However, this level of analysis and revision in instruction and planning has yet to be reflected in other areas such as science and social studies, limiting students’ ability to demonstrate progress in all areas.
Additional Finding

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Quality Indicator:</th>
<th>4.1 Teacher Support and Supervision</th>
<th>Rating:</th>
<th>Proficient</th>
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Findings

School leaders provide feedback in the form of glows and grows which clearly captures the strengths, areas for improvement and next steps aligned to the Danielson Framework for Teaching. School leaders have an effective system that uses teacher observation data to design professional development.

Impact

Feedback articulates clear expectations for teacher practice in support of their growth. Informed decisions using teacher observation data, including succession plans, support and increase the quality of schoolwide instructional practices, strategy implementation, and reflection across the school.

Supporting Evidence

- A review of observation reports reflects feedback in the form of glows and grows based on conversations between school leaders and teachers to foster professional reflection and best practice in teaching and learning, connected to the Danielson Framework for Teaching. One feedback report showed the component, assessment in instruction, as a strength and designing coherent instruction as a growth area. The teacher was asked to consider planning for daily sequences of small group instruction versus weekly to maximize instructional time and differentiate student reading groups. Another report where designing coherent instruction is shown as an area for growth, reflects information for how the teacher can modify the lesson plan to maximize instructional time thus ensuring all students are appropriately engaged throughout the entire period.

- Several observation reports contain a focus aligned to the instructional focus of increasing the rigor and quality of questioning and student discussion. One observation report offers support in how to use student role cards for discussion and provides a website on student-centered discussion to promote learning and student engagement. Another report shares feedback on how best to use the discussion role cards and foster critical thinking through student questioning. The school leader listed steps the teacher could take to model how to engage students in questioning each other while discussing topics and provides a video to support the teacher’s progress in this component and deepen instructional practices.

- School leaders consistently review observation reports and ratings for trends and patterns in specific components to provide support to teachers in utilizing best practice in the classroom. This has resulted in professional learning sessions on designing coherent instruction and promoting high-quality discussion using rigorous questions. Additionally, a review of observation reports shows that teachers are offered opportunities to visit one another to view model practices from teachers who have demonstrated and received scores of effective or highly effective in specific components. Support for the succession of these lead teachers is provided by the principal to ensure they are actively assisting their colleagues and contributing to the profession. One observation report reflects school leaders recommending one teacher to visit another to view how the teacher engages her class in student-centered discussion techniques. Teachers reported that professional learning sessions and intervisitations on questioning and discussion have helped them develop and increase the usage and frequency of discussion role cards in their classes and aid in grouping. Taken together, professional learning is leading teachers towards a pathway to increasing the quality of teaching and learning.
Findings

The majority of teachers are beginning to engage in professional cross-grade, vertical team collaborations which use data and work products to analyze the progress of students.

Impact

Teacher team structures are establishing structures to build sustainable inquiry practices towards improving teacher practices and conduct consistent reviews of student work and data to determine the progress target of student groups.

Supporting Evidence

- The grade three-five vertical team structures their meeting through the use of agendas which show that the team uses a looking at student work protocol to assess student writing samples and determine whether they are meeting the school goals and state standards. Notes reflect that the teacher team used the protocol to identify trends and patterns in student writing and identified a writing lesson for an intervisitation with a colleague to view best practices in literacy instruction. Additionally, the team analyzes trends in math performance tasks and determine which online tools are appropriate for intervention. A review of another team’s agendas and notes mainly reflects discussion on classroom environment and planning instruction in the literacy block using the school’s selected ELA curricula. Therefore, the consistent analysis of student work centered on a problem of practice and which connects to the school’s goals, is a growing practice across other teams in the school.

- According to teachers, other teams in the school have just begun to integrate the use of the looking at student work protocol. Mainly the work of teams has been to discuss practices or lessons and use suggestions to revamp activities to foster student engagement. On one team, teachers have begun to review short Common Core-aligned writing responses and noticed that students are not using sufficient evidence to support their ideas, relative to the ELA instructional shifts on text-based answers and writing from sources. Teachers have begun to use the Restate, Answer, Cite and Explain strategy to help students enhance the quality of their writing. Other suggestions include the use of scaffolded texts or providing more targeted feedback to students. On another team, a review of student work led teachers to integrate word-building card activities and even conduct an intervisitation of another teacher to view how best to integrate this activity into early-grade instruction. One teacher commented that she is learning how to become more confident in grouping her students.

- Although teacher teams review student work, sustained review of student results over time is a growing practice. Currently, individual teachers bring in student work for review and share best practice, yet a review of team agendas reflects that as a team, reflection of best practice is a work in progress. Additionally, presented students are not consistently monitored by all teams to determine whether growth has been made and whether strategies suggested can be leveraged within a particular grade or across grades and content areas. During a grade three-five team meeting, teachers reflected on a performance task and how students are utilizing the CUBES strategy for problem solving after sharing how the students targeted the previous week improved their performance using the same strategy. However, across the school, consistent review of the progress of targeted students is not reflected in team notes or agendas, as reflected during this particular meeting.