Quality Review Report

2017-2018

P.S. 306 Ethan Allen
K-8 19K306
970 Vermont Street
Brooklyn
NY 11207

Principal: Lenika Vane

Dates of Review:
May 10, 2018 - May 11, 2018

Lead Reviewer: Debra Tasioudis
**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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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>To what extent does the school...</strong></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>Additional Finding</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>
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</tbody>
</table>
### School Culture

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

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Area</th>
<th>Rating</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1.4 Maintain a culture of mutual trust and positive attitudes that supports the academic and personal growth of students and adults</td>
<td>Area of Focus</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>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

### Systems for Improvement

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

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Area</th>
<th>Rating</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1.3 Make strategic organizational decisions to support the schools instructional goals and meet student learning needs, as evidenced by meaningful student work products</td>
<td>Additional Finding</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>
</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>
</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>
</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>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
### Findings

The majority of teachers are involved in inquiry-based professional collaborations using the *DataWise* protocol. Teachers regularly take on leadership roles throughout the school.

### Impact

The instructional capacity of teachers is strengthened through inquiry work and collaboration, including analysis of student work. Distributed leadership structures allow teachers to have an active voice in schoolwide decisions.

### Supporting Evidence

- During an observed English Language Arts (ELA) teacher team meeting, teachers took on roles such as facilitator, timekeeper, and note-taker, and followed an agenda and protocol to structure their inquiry into looking at student writing. Teachers worked through a cycle focused on observing how students used transition phrases and structured their paragraphs, and discussed instructional next steps, such as adding a graphic organizer and having students take time to draw before writing. Teachers also reviewed data relative to student reading levels, and made connections between teacher focus on sequencing in reading and improvements in students’ use of transitional phrases in their own writing. Conversations with school staff, and records reviewed of other teams’ meetings, demonstrate that the majority of teachers are engaged in similar inquiry aligned to the school’s goals, focused on improving student learning in writing or math.

- A teacher from each grade serves on the school’s instructional cabinet alongside administrators, and they meet regularly to assess the work of teacher teams, design professional learning, use of assessments and their alignment to curricula, ensuring that teachers have a voice in key decisions that affect student learning across the school. At a question and answer session, teachers shared that they have a strong voice in making adaptations to new curricula, both in the order of units and in the selection of texts for students.

- Several teachers in the school have formal leadership roles, such as the Individualized Education Program (IEP) teacher, Data Champion, and Peer Collaborative Teacher (PCT). The school’s IEP teacher provides mentoring and professional learning for other staff members on professional responsibilities and instructional best practices for serving students with disabilities. The Data Champion is a teacher who attends professional learning with the assistant principal at Harvard University and serves as a teacher leader for the school’s inquiry process, providing professional learning and serving as a resource for teacher teams as they engage in data analysis and looking at student work. The PCT provides direct support to teachers, either at the request of the teacher or administrator to improve a staff members’ instructional practice, and uses her classroom as a lab site for modeling district initiatives, such as the interactive read aloud. Teachers at a question and answer session shared that the work of the PCT and targeted professional learning helps to build coherence in instructional strategies across their classrooms and create consistency for students, of instructional strategies across the grades.
Findings
Under new leadership, the school is developing an approach to culture, trust building, discipline, and social-emotional supports for students and adults. Alignment between professional learning, family outreach, and student learning experiences is also being developed.

Impact
The tone of the school is generally, but not consistently respectful, and student voice is not yet welcomed and valued. Student learning, professional learning for staff, and family outreach do not yet consistently promote the adoption of positive academic and personal behaviors.

Supporting Evidence

- Students voiced concerns about the ways that they interact with one another in the school. Students shared that both verbal and physical fights among students occur and make them feel unsafe. In a separate meeting, school staff also shared that fighting among students was sometimes an issue, and that teachers are beginning to address small behaviors and issues right away, before things escalate. Several teachers shared that they try to get students to come to the teacher first, to prevent fights from happening. Teachers and staff also talked about feeling supported by their peers in trying to assist if a student is upset, or if there is fighting between students. On the second day of the review, a new program began to provide students with structured play during recess to address fighting during lunch.

- Several students also shared that some teachers raise their voices in class, and that it makes them feel disrespected. The community school partner, Partnership with Children, provides the school with staff trained in trauma-informed counselling that is leading the work of changing the school's culture. Staff from Partnership with Children has provided a few professional learning sessions to school staff on how to deescalate disruptive behavior and respond calmly to students in crisis. The school leader also purchased a new social-emotional learning curriculum that highlights monthly a different virtue such as compassion and kindness, and teachers are beginning to teach students how to interact to each other, instead of fighting, by using shared readings and lessons on the virtues. The school leaders and staff shared that they are at the beginning of a three-year process to fully embed this new curricula, and that there is already a new common language taking shape among staff. A coach from the Field Support Center conducts school building walkthroughs and designs instructional and professional learning next steps for staff connected to social-emotional learning.

- There have been a few schoolwide assemblies on bullying and student behavior, and there are incentives, such as a class trophy for the class with the top attendance for the month. The school also has weekly activities for groups of students or some students at each grade level. My Brother’s Keeper, a mentoring program for ten students, martial arts, theater, restorative circles, or Boat Works, a program for 24 fifth graders who work collaboratively to build a sailboat are part of the school's approach to support students. While these learning experiences are promoting academic and personal behaviors of college and career readiness for some students, there are not yet opportunities like this for all learners.
Additional Finding

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

School leaders and faculty make decisions to ensure that curricula is aligned to Common Core Learning Standards and integrate academic vocabulary and writing from sources. Curricula and academic tasks consistently emphasize rigorous habits and higher order skills.

Impact

Alignment to the Common Core and purposeful integration of the instructional shifts build coherence of curriculum across the grades and subjects to promote college and career readiness for all students.

Supporting Evidence

- Lesson plans shared during the review demonstrate alignment to the Common Core standards, in the content area, as well as a speaking and listening standard, to promote college readiness for all students. A third grade lesson on ancient Egypt included opportunities for students to compare and contrast different geographical areas as well as discuss the impact of living close to a large body of water. In a second grade math lesson on using math drawings to represent a composition of numbers and relate drawings to a written method, students were asked to solve problems independently, and then tell a partner about how they organized their model and solved their math problem, ensuring that students get to practice higher order skills. This dual focus on content and language objectives helps to ensure student growth in the subject areas, as well as their ability to engage in rich and rigorous conversations, promoting college readiness.

- Lesson plans include opportunities for students to engage in questioning and discussion of informational texts in social studies and English Language Arts (ELA). In a fourth grade social studies lesson on the American Revolution, students were asked to use primary and secondary sources, including text and images to form opinions and determine the central idea of texts. In math, lessons included a focus on problem solving. In a fifth grade math lesson, students were asked to find the area of rectangles with mixed-by-mixed and fraction-by-fraction side lengths by tiling, drawing, and relating to fraction multiplication. In addition to selecting a method of problem solving, students were also tasked with creating a visual model of their work and explaining their math thinking in writing, or to a peer, ensuring rigorous habits for a variety of learners in Common Core-aligned tasks.

- Across the grades and subjects, teachers use a common unit planning template that includes attention to essential questions, standards, content areas of focus and foundational standards. Some units also include revisions based on recommendations from the district to increase rigor, such as the inclusion of higher-order thinking questions and performance tasks. All units shared during the review also included revisions to create multiple entry points for student with disabilities and English Language Learners (ELLs), such as purposefully selected graphic organizers to scaffold student thinking, academic and domain-specific vocabulary, and links to additional resources, such as supplemental readings or videos to ensure that a variety of students have access to the task. Thus, the units shared align to the Common Core with common planning practices across grades and subjects to build coherence.
Findings
Classroom practices inconsistently provide multiple entry points into the curricula, and student tasks and discussions are not always appropriately challenging.

Impact
Teaching practices, including the use of scaffolds and supports lead to uneven student engagement in both appropriately challenging tasks and demonstration of higher-order thinking skills in student work products and discussions.

Supporting Evidence

- In one class visited, students used a note-taker to gather evidence from a variety of informational texts and images that allowed them, including students with disabilities and ELLs, to demonstrate their thinking as they cited and interpreted evidence from a text. The note-taker, and arrangement of students in small groups prompted students to develop and pose questions, of the text and in response to each other’s thoughts. This level of scaffolding, student-to-student interaction, and ownership of questioning and discussion around text-based evidence was not seen in other classrooms across the school. In other classes, access to the thinking of peers was the most commonly observed scaffold, but students were not tasked or supported in developing questions for discussions with peers.

- In several math classes visited during the review, students were provided with manipulatives, but in all but one, students were not instructed on how to use them, and consequently, students did not use the materials to support them in solving problems and demonstrating their thinking. In one class, a few groups of students attempted to use math tiles and self-created grids to check their work, but students shared that they were not sure how to use them to check their work, or to use another method to check their thinking. This led to uneven levels of student thinking and engagement in student work products.

- Though differentiated tasks were noted as a school belief and were often found in lesson plans, they were seldom seen in action in the classroom. As students worked through the same task in several classes, the rigor was too low for some, so that students finished their tasks quickly and sat waiting for a new task. For other students, as in a non-fiction reading lesson, some students were able to engage with the text and pull out main ideas and details, others found the text too difficult and were not able to understand enough vocabulary to make meaning of the text. In a coding class, students were assigned with creating repeated movements using nested loops, and had vocabulary supports at their desks and around the classroom that they used to ensure that they were performing the correct functions as they created block chains. This level of vocabulary support, specific to the lesson was not observed in most other classrooms visited.

- In some classes, students were tasked with independent reading, but there was no clearly defined task within their reading time, or the reading was accompanied by low level questions, whose answers were easily found in the text. In a class beginning a new unit on researching American history, students were required to work with a partner to read a text of their choosing from a bin of books, but when asked, students were unsure of why the books were chosen, or what they were looking to discover as they read, leading to uneven levels of student thinking and participation.
**Findings**

While teachers are using curricula-aligned rubrics to assess student work, students either do not receive actionable next steps, or students cannot make sense of the next steps provided by teachers. The practice of assessing student progress through ongoing checks for understanding is not consistent across classes.

**Impact**

There are missed opportunities for teachers to provide actionable feedback to students and to use information from assessments to make effective adjustments to instruction.

**Supporting Evidence**

- During a meeting, students shared pieces of work from their classes. Half of the student work samples shared had feedback from the teacher and a grade that the students could read and understand. Of those pieces, two had actionable next steps for students. One read, “You were able to tell the reader about a book that you like, spelled your words correctly and ended your sentences with correct punctuation. For your next step, include more information in your next writing activity.” Other student work shared either did not have actionable next steps for students, or the student could not understand the feedback, because it was written in cursive, or the words were too difficult for the student to understand. Some student work shared had no feedback in the form of a grade or comment, limiting the feedback to students and teachers regarding student achievement.

- Student work observed on classrooms walls, bulletin boards, and in student work folders, was similarly inconsistent in the provision of actionable feedback to students, sometimes having grades and feedback, other times not. In math folders, feedback to students was often limited to “good job” or check or x marks, but no comment or correction to students. These inconsistencies limit the feedback to students and teachers regarding student achievement.

- Across classes, during instruction, teachers checked for understanding as students worked, usually by asking questions to individual or groups of students. However, in most classes, teachers took no notes or made few adjustments to meet student learning needs. In a few classes, the teacher stopped the class to review a concept, but students already had the correct answers, making the review and adjustment less effective. In a math class, as students solved questions on whiteboards, paraprofessionals checked and corrected the student work before having them show their work to the teacher, making the teacher’s check for understanding ineffective at uncovering student learning needs.
Findings
School leaders have established a culture for learning that communicates high expectations to staff. Teachers consistently communicate expectations connected to college and career readiness to families through ongoing communication.

Impact
Teachers receiving training and professional development helps support their achievement of high expectations and they are held accountable for achieving them. Families understand the criteria for how their children are graded and receive regular updates on progress toward expectations.

Supporting Evidence

- Through monthly letters to staff from the principal, and a newly instituted Teachers Reference Guide, the school leaders consistently communicate clear expectations to staff about instructional practices, professionalism, and collaboration with colleagues and families. Principal Notes, the monthly newsletter from the principal, reinforces the school’s vision and mission and provides glows and grows and next steps from instructional walkthroughs conducted during the month. In one from December, a next step given to staff was, “ensure that teacher feedback to scholars is authentic, rubric-based, and highlights glows and grows.” Another from February reinforces the school’s instructional focus to ensure that all students are making their thinking visible, not only in writing, but also by engaging in discourse. The reminder was accompanied by guidance on discussion techniques from the Danielson Framework for Teaching, as well as questions for teachers to use to reflect on the types of questions that they ask during a lesson, and how students are grouped and provided with opportunities to engage in discussions with one another during the delivery of lessons. These Principal Notes reinforce expectations found in the Teachers Reference Guide provided to teachers, and offer additional supports to teachers in meeting expectations.

- School leaders and external coaches work together to ensure frequent observation of teachers to hold the staff accountable for instructional expectations. The school has a number of external coaches that meet regularly with school leaders and the instructional cabinet, comprised of teacher leaders to determine the professional learning needs of teachers. Coaches provide support to teacher teams, and to teachers one-on-one, during classroom instruction, and during planning sessions. A slide show of a presentation to teachers by an external math coach demonstrates professional learning time for teachers dedicated to ensuring that lesson plans and curriculum maps include higher-order thinking questions, balanced math components and strategies to differentiate instruction for students with disabilities and ELLs. Similarly, the school’s professional learning map demonstrates similar supports from an external reading coach to ensure that teachers have training to support them in developing appropriate strategy and guided reading groups for ELA.

- In a meeting, parents shared that teachers consistently communicate with them about their children’s progress during face-to-face meetings held afterschool, by phone and/or by texts to ensure that they are current on their children’s daily progress. Progress reports, report cards, and promotion-in-doubt letters are sent home several times a year, (as appropriate), to keep families up-to-date on the progress toward expectations. Parents also praised the principal and teachers for readily setting up parent-teacher conferences, outside of regularly scheduled conference times, to help make expectations for student progress clear.