Quality Review Report

2017-2018

Junior High-Intermediate-Middle 32K349
35 Starr Street
Brooklyn
NY 11221

Principal: Michael Loughren

Dates of Review:
May 24, 2018 - May 25, 2018

Lead Reviewer: Edward Hazen
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><strong>To what extent does the school...</strong></td>
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<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>Area of Focus</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>
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</table>
### School Culture

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<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>
<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 Celebration</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

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<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>
<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>
</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>Additional Finding</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>
Area of Celebration

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Quality Indicator:</th>
<th>1.4 Positive Learning Environment</th>
<th>Rating:</th>
<th>Well Developed</th>
</tr>
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</table>

Findings

The school’s approach to culture-building, discipline, and social-emotional support is informed by the shared philosophy of creating a community-based school. Support services allow staff, students, and families to collaborate in addressing all students’ academic and social emotional needs.

Impact

School leaders maintain a culture of mutual trust and positive attitudes that contribute to a safe, inclusive personalized learning environment in which students play a role in schoolwide decisions and are known well by adults. Structures are in place resulting in social-emotional learning that supports student growth and positive personal behavior choices.

Supporting Evidence

- Systems are in place to create a safe and inclusive school culture that promotes positive interactions among school community members. School leaders and staff reported that the school’s vision for promoting a positive culture is rooted in their ideology of being a community school where all stakeholders are welcomed and valued. The school vision is to build a student-centered learning community where students’ social-emotional needs are supported, and they are challenged academically in a risk-free environment that is conducive to learning. To this end, the school has implemented a Peer Group Connection (PGC) program, a peer-mentoring program focused on easing the transition from elementary to middle school and building a positive school culture. Eighth grade students representing the diversity of the school participate in a daily leadership class that prepares them to work in pairs facilitating and leading bi-monthly social-emotional learning activities with groups of 10-12 sixth graders. Students reported that the PGC has resulted in their bonding with one another and has created a respectful school environment, “that is mostly drama free.” This statement is supported by a five percent drop in the suspension rate from eight percent in 2016 to three percent in 2017.

- The school has a student council in place to meaningfully involve students in decision-making and to initiate and lead school improvement efforts. Students reported that during 2015-2016 school year, they successfully lobbied school leaders to create a student council to promote more student involvement. Students further reported that the student council has been responsible for initiating several activities, events, and changes that have had a positive impact on the culture of the school. For example, students were responsible for creating a spirit week and organized all facets of the event, resulting in the vast majority of students participating in the activities. One student shared and all present agreed, “It has definitely resulted in a lot more of us taking pride in the school.” To improve attendance rates during times in which they historically drop, such as late spring, students instituted a Slushee Celebration for students who maintain a rate of 90 percent or better.

- Structures are in place to ensure that each student is known well by at least one adult who helps personalize attendance and offer guidance and advisement. The school has 22 staff members who serve as Success Mentors to build caring, one-to-one relationships with assigned mentees, encouraging them to maintain a positive attitude and attend school every day. The school emphasizes the importance of daily attendance by partnering with parents to closely monitor their children's progress via an online app that updates students’ attendance data in real time and notifies parents immediately about absences or tardiness, thereby allowing the parent to be the first adult to intervene. The school celebrates students with attendance rates of 90 percent or better by offering incentives such as pizza parties, dress-down days, and movie screenings. As a result, the percentage of students that maintained a 90 percent or better average attendance rate in 2017 was 83 percent, two percentage points higher than the citywide average.
Area of Focus

| Quality Indicator: | 1.1 Curriculum | Rating: | Proficient |

Findings

School leaders and staff have a process to ensure alignment of the curricula to the Common Core Learning Standards and include rigorous academic tasks that are accessible for a variety of learners.

Impact

The curricula reflect planning for academic tasks and discourse, with rigorous habits that build coherence across subjects and grades and support college and career readiness for students with diverse learning needs. However, some teachers do not strategically plan higher-level cognitive tasks for the highest-achieving students.

Supporting Evidence

- School leaders and faculty have developed a structure to ensure that curricula are aligned to the Common Core, State content standards, and integrate the instructional shifts. When creating curriculum maps and planning units of study, teacher collaborative teams use data and student work to plan cognitively-challenging academic tasks along with scaffolds to support the diversity of learning styles in their classrooms. Likewise, teachers include assessments of learning in their lesson plans, such as exit tickets and pre- and post-assessments, to determine the level of student learning that will inform planning for subsequent instruction. Curriculum maps and related documents are stored electronically in the school’s shared drive, allowing access for all teachers to align their lesson plans to the curricula.

- A review of curriculum documents across grades and subjects reveals evidence of teacher teamwork to integrate the Common Core and the instructional shifts in English Language Arts (ELA), math, science, and social studies. Across grade levels and disciplines, students are required to make claims and counterclaims and justify arguments with supporting textual evidence. To foster classroom discussion, teachers have identified prompts and activities that encourage high levels of student discourse, such as turn and talks, think-write-pair-share, and the inclusion of academic vocabulary. Such tasks are embedded into many lesson plans. This further promotes coherence across grades and content areas and fosters college and career readiness skills. However, the level of purposeful planning varied across classes. For example, an eighth-grade math lesson had been planned using mid-module assessment data to group students accordingly and provided differentiated worksheets to target the groups’ skill deficits, while an algebra lesson plan listed possible supports for students such as, “Anchor Sheets for Notebooks, Differentiated Instruction Worksheet and Student Handouts.”

- Staff members meet weekly to review and revise curriculum documents to ensure accessibility for a diversity of learners. Based on the analysis of student work samples and assessment data, teachers adjust lesson plans and curricula to encourage student-centered tasks and provide supports that allow multiple access points into the lesson through differentiation of assignments and planning for leveled student groupings. A review of curricula indicates that while most lesson plans included multiple entry points, the vast majority of teachers have yet to purposefully plan academic tasks that include scaffolds and extensions to engage all students in high levels of cognitive challenge. For example, a sixth-grade math lesson plan on calculating the volume of rectangular prisms included supports such as manipulatives, times tables, designated table helpers and ability-based differentiated worksheets for students working in peer collaborative groups. Additionally, a seventh-grade social studies lesson plan stated, “Vocabulary words will be given to students who need them” as a means of engaging all students in the lesson.
Additional Finding

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

Teaching strategies align to schoolwide goals and shared beliefs. Most teachers provide entry points through the use of leveled groupings and scaffolds to promote student engagement in challenging academic tasks.

Impact

Students engage in high levels of thinking and discussion, leading to meaningful work products across classrooms for all levels of students. However, these practices were not observed across the vast majority of classes visited.

Supporting Evidence

- Across classrooms, teaching practices align to the school’s articulated beliefs that students learn best when they are engaged in purposeful, higher-order academic tasks and discussions to promote college and career ready skills for all. School leaders and teachers identified the Teachers College Reading and Writing Program (TCRWP) workshop model as the best way to align instructional practices to schoolwide beliefs. The workshop model was observed being utilized across classrooms and grade levels. Most students were observed participating in pre-determined groups, involved in partner discussions utilizing think-write-pair-share and turn and talk protocols, and were provided with scaffolds such as discussion stems to keep them engaged in purposeful conversations.

- In a seventh-grade co-taught ELA class, students were in leveled groups based on their *iReady* assessments and performance on previous writing tasks. Student groups were provided with differentiated materials and scaffolds, such as story-element and characterization prompts. The teachers conducted a mini-lesson to model how, when writing an essay, good readers use strategies to find evidence in texts to support claims. This was done prior to having students transition into their groups. Later, one teacher checked in with the groups while taking notes on their progress while the other provided targeted interventions to students who struggled to make inferences using details from the text. This approach supported the variety of learning needs in the class. However, this level of support was not seen across the vast majority of classes visited, with some teachers not providing extension activities for higher-level students that completed their tasks early. For example, in a sixth-grade math class, no extension activities were planned for such students. Consequently, a higher-level group that finished solving their problems on the volume of rectangular prisms were not provided with another activity; rather, some students sat and waited for further direction while others worked on an assignment for another class.

- In a seventh-grade science class, students were required to work with partners to locate and label anatomical terms on a frog prior to a dissection activity. Students discussed with their elbow partners similarities and differences between the anatomy of a frog and a human and then shared their findings with the other groups. To promote high levels of discourse, the teacher partnered high and low achieving students by their ELA and science abilities using their State ELA exam scores and performance on previous end of unit tests. Each group had a visual of a frog on their worksheets, with an example of anatomical terms that could be used as discussion prompts. The teacher visited each group to monitor student discussion levels and reminded them to use academic vocabulary. All students were observed engaged in the activity and reported that they were excited about the opportunity to dissect a real frog rather than relying on learning anatomy through virtual dissection.
Additional Finding

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<thead>
<tr>
<th>Quality Indicator:</th>
<th>2.2 Assessment</th>
<th>Rating:</th>
<th>Proficient</th>
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Findings
Across classrooms, teachers use common assessment data to make adjustments to curricula and instruction. Teachers use rubrics and checklists aligned with curricula and content standards across grades and disciplines to provide actionable feedback to students on their writing tasks.

Impact
Common assessment data are used to assess students’ progress toward meeting the standards and achieving grade level benchmarks. Although teachers use rubrics to provide feedback to students regarding their progress and performance, feedback is not yet meaningful for students in the vast majority of classes.

Supporting Evidence

- Across grade levels, teachers use common assessments, rubrics, and checklists aligned to the Common Core and content standards. The TCRWP writing rubrics and checklists are used to promote consistency across disciplines. Teachers use mentor texts and exemplars to set benchmarks for student writing, with students using checklists to self-assess their progress. Similarly, teachers provide students with feedback with actionable next steps to improve their writing during one-on-one conferencing sessions held routinely in class during the writing workshops. Students stated that teacher feedback during conferencing sessions has helped improve their writing, and that it adequately prepares them for the State ELA assessment. Although a review of student work samples revealed that students receive feedback on their writing tasks, students were unable to articulate how feedback has helped them adjust and improve their overall learning styles.

- Across grades and disciplines, teachers use common assessment data to determine student progress toward achieving mastery of the standards, to identify trends in student achievement, and to make adjustments to curricula and pedagogy. Teacher teams have made adaptations and modifications to the TCRWP to include scaffolds and supports for ELLs and students with disabilities, such as sentence starters and graphic organizers. Similarly, the ELA and social studies departments created common assessments for interdisciplinary units of study consisting of writing tasks with rubrics to build coherence in the assessment of written work across content areas. Moreover, to improve the number of students meeting or exceeding standards in math, teachers use EngageNY mid- and end-of-module assessments, which teacher teams analyze to revise curricula to meet the needs of all students.

- Data related to students’ reading and math skills are collected via iReady assessments four times a year. This allows teacher teams to monitor student progress toward goals and plan interventions accordingly. A common assessment practice is to monitor students’ progress toward meeting proficiency on the State math and ELA assessments and plan strategic instruction to address students’ needs as identified through data analysis. Similarly, teacher teams routinely use running records to determine leveled instructional groups and make revisions to lesson plans and instruction. Across grades, teachers reported using student common assessment data, such as results from end-of-unit tests, to create instructional groups and provide differentiated instruction to struggling students’ achievement and plan enrichment tasks for students at or above the benchmark.
**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 faculty consistently communicate high expectations to students and their families. Students and parents receive guidance, advisement, and support to meet schoolwide expectations.

**Impact**

School leaders and staff maintain a culture for learning and consistently provide feedback to families about their children, resulting in students and their families being aware of their progress toward college and career readiness. As a result, students are starting to take ownership of their educational experiences.

**Supporting Evidence**

- School leaders have systems and structures to communicate high expectations to families that lead to college and career readiness for their children. Parents report receiving regular communication from the school, including information on the Common Core and college and career readiness, through a variety of means, including backpack notifications, multimedia platforms, and online. Parents further noted that they are aware of the academic and behavioral expectations for their children and are kept up to date on their children’s progress through report cards, parent conferences, correspondence with teachers via emails, and an online grading system. Students reported that in addition to using the online system, they frequently receive verbal feedback from teachers during one-on-one conferencing sessions in class during their writing workshops.

- Faculty and school leadership establish a culture for learning that communicates high expectations for all students connected to a path towards college and career readiness, helping students and their families understand their progress toward these expectations. The schoolwide expectations are shared with students at the beginning of the school year as well as throughout the year during advisory. The school maintains an Are you Ahead? data board that serves as a dashboard to display student progress in reaching identified benchmarks including attendance, iReady minutes, and course grades. Additionally, students are required to participate in student-led parent-teacher conferences at the end of each marking period so that they are consistently aware of their progress.

- Ongoing feedback and advisement help promote student ownership of their educational experiences and prepare them for the next level. The school has a mentoring program in place in which staff members serve as success mentors to remind students about schoolwide expectations and help them meet these expectations. Eighth-grade students and their parents reported that advisement has been helpful in promoting positive academic and social behaviors and preparing them for high school, including providing assistance in applying to the high schools of their choice. Parents further reported that their children are becoming better organized and prepared for school, an indication that students are starting to take ownership of their behavior.
Findings
The vast majority of teachers are engaged in structured inquiry-based teamwork to embed the Common Core Learning Standards into lesson plans and units of study. Teacher teams analyze student data to identify instructional practices that will close gaps in student achievement.

Impact
Across grades and departments, teacher teams analyze data and student work products, resulting in the implementation of the Common Core and instructional shifts, such as students’ using multiple sources to justify a claim. The work of teacher teams has strengthened teacher instructional capacity and improved student achievement.

Supporting Evidence

- The majority of teachers are engaged in structured, inquiry-based professional collaborations to promote the implementation of the Common Core and the instructional shifts, build coherence across grades and disciplines, and elevate teacher practice. Grade-level and content-area teachers each meet weekly to plan rigorous units of study and lesson plans, make revisions to curricula to ensure accessibility for all students, and plan targeted instruction for student groups identified as pushables, near meeting or exceeding proficiency on State assessments, and slippables, at-risk of not meeting proficiency. To ensure efficacy during teacher-team meetings and the inquiry cycle, the majority of teachers have received professional development in facilitating effective team meetings through the Data Wise Improvement Process, which includes learning about individual and team goal-setting, data-driven classroom instruction, and implementing Common Core-aligned instructional practices.

- As part of the inquiry cycle, teachers engage in intervisitation to observe strategies that they can emulate in their own classrooms. Teacher-leaders are engaged in developing protocols for the intervisitation cycle. This includes collecting low-inference data and providing feedback that engages teachers in reciprocal reflection and constructive dialogue, leading to targeted adjustments in their teaching practice. Teacher-team analysis of curricula and academic tasks contained in lesson and unit plans resulted in the identification of gaps in providing multiple entry points and academic support for students, informing next steps in curriculum decisions. For example, the need for a student-centered, small-group instructional model to meet the rigor of the instructional shifts while providing differentiated academic tasks for students led to teacher teams continuing their work on revising the TCRWP to improve writing across content areas. Consequently, ELA teachers collaborate with social studies and science teachers to incorporate common writing techniques into instruction using the TCRWP strategies as a framework.

- Grade-level and department teacher teams meet to analyze assessment data from a variety of sources, including State assessments, common formative assessments such as exit tickets, and summative assessments such as end-of-unit tests. Analysis of assessments across subjects and grade levels provides teacher teams with baseline data to help inform changes to curricula and instruction and identify instructional practices to support high-need student groups, including ELLs and students with disabilities. Data is used to create instructional groups, provide targeted interventions, and proactively prepare pushable and slippable students for the State assessments. These practices have resulted in an overall 10 percentage point increase on the State ELA assessment scores for students in grades three through eight, from seven percent in 2014 to 17 percent in 2017.