Quality Review Report

2017-2018

James Weldon Johnson

K-8 04M057

176 East 115 Street
Manhattan
NY 10029

Principal: Nancy Jacqueline Diaz

Dates of Review:
February 7, 2018 - February 8, 2018

Lead Reviewer: Kevin Bradley
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

James Weldon Johnson serves students in grade PK 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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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>To what extent does the school...</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>1.1 Ensure engaging, rigorous, and coherent curricula in all subjects, accessible for a variety of learners and aligned to Common Core Learning Standards and/or content standards</td>
<td>Additional Finding</td>
<td>Proficient</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1.2 Develop teacher pedagogy from a coherent set of beliefs about how students learn best that is informed by the instructional shifts and Danielson Framework for Teaching, aligned to the curricula, engaging, and meets the needs of all learners so that all students produce meaningful work products</td>
<td>Area of Focus</td>
<td>Proficient</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2.2 Align assessments to curricula, use on-going assessment and grading practices, and analyze information on student learning outcomes to adjust instructional decisions at the team and classroom levels</td>
<td>Additional Finding</td>
<td>Proficient</td>
</tr>
</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>Additional Finding</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3.4 Establish a culture for learning that communicates high expectations to staff, students and families, and provide supports to achieve those expectations</td>
<td>Additional Finding</td>
</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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</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>
</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>
Area of Celebration

| Quality Indicator: | 4.2 Teacher Teams and Leadership Development | Rating: | Proficient |

Findings

The majority of teachers are engaged in grade-based teacher teams that meet to review curricula, differentiation strategies, as well as best practices and student work. Teacher teams consistently analyze data and student work for students they share.

Impact

Teacher collaborations have strengthened their instructional capacity. Teacher team work typically results in progress toward goals for groups of students such as increases in reading levels.

Supporting Evidence

- An observed fifth-grade inquiry team looked at student writing from a Teachers College (TC) opinion writing unit. Roles were defined for group members as facilitator, note taker, and timekeeper. Each teacher brought examples of student writing pieces from their current opinion units on writing. The team used the opinion writing rubric to assess the different pieces of student work. The teachers analyzed common trends; the findings were students showed evidence of use of index cards to help organize and sort reasons/evidence, categorizing and identifying reasons as a class, grouping evidence by reason, use of sticky notes to organize for/against, and identified reasons as a whole. The team agreed upon next steps and a plan of action, including stems for transitions, creating a checklist, and doing a chalk talk to explain evidence. One teacher decided to use the index card strategy next time that was shared by one of her colleagues. Outcomes identified by the team were to consider updating the articles for the health unit, uploading resources discussed during the meeting, and using the TC rubric earlier in the writing process with the students.

- A first-grade team focused on ideas to teach students how to find text evidence. Based on the mid-year reading assessment gap analysis, the team noticed that students struggled going back to the text to answer a question. Each teacher shared strategies recently used in their instruction including using nonfiction text with comprehension questions and a lesson plan that covers vocabulary and answering questions. Another teacher shared having students write words on sticky notes that describe the character and then identify where in the text to find the evidence. Another teacher shared asking questions and highlighting responses from two poems. A teacher also shared an activity in which students have to follow the color code to color clues from the text and then write their responses, and students go back into the text to identify the sequence of events. The team also looked at results from the mid-year math performance task assessment and identified gaps across all classes. Students struggled with questions about tens frame using two steps, finding the missing number to make an equivalent amount, and short response questions. The team decided the next steps were rewording the short response addition/subtraction question to avoid confusion and teachers would bring ideas to their next inquiry team meeting for gap remediation that focuses on finding the missing number to make an equivalent amount.

- Teachers have strengthened their instructional capacity through team collaborations. Teachers spoke about how the work of the teacher teams has helped to improve their instructional practices. “We discuss different best practices; it keeps us focused on curriculum, and accountability through sharing resources.” Progress toward goals for groups of students is evidenced by increases in reading levels as measured by Fountas and Pinnell in second and third grades when comparing results from the beginning of the school year in September-October 2017 and the middle of the school year in December-January 2018.
Findings

Across classrooms, teaching practices are aligned to the curricula and reflect the articulated belief that students learn best through multiple opportunities for success. Student work products reflect high levels of student thinking and participation in many classes.

Impact

Although students are grouped and engaged in differentiated work and student work products and discussions reflected high levels of student thinking and participation in most classes, articulated beliefs and student ownership were not yet evident in all classes.

Supporting Evidence

- In a fifth-grade math class, students worked together in groups solving a math problem on chart paper that included an error for students to catch on comparing fractions and products. Teachers worked closely with groups designed using EngageNY assessment results while students who needed the most support, teacher asked, “Explain to me what his error was?” Two students at the pink tennis balls station missed the error and completed the graphic organizer and moved on to the next station. In a seventh-grade Integrated Co-Teaching (ICT) lesson about character traits, as the teacher modeled what brave and leader conveys about the main character and asked students to give ideas from text, a few students were involved in the teacher-student discussion. Table groups waited patiently for other groups to get their reading books, some groups waited several minutes. While there was a small group working with another teacher using a close reading plan, overall use of instructional time had a negative impact on student engagement across the class. Articulated beliefs about how students learn best with multiple opportunities for success were evident in most classes, but not across the vast majority of classes.

- In a second-grade class, students looked at an image of a nest as part of animal homes unit. Students participated in turn-n-talk with partners about what they see, think, wonder. The teacher used popsicle sticks to call on students to share out after turn-n-talk. The student who spoke was given opportunity to choose the nest to share. In fourth-grade math class, seven student groups, with three or four students in each, were working on differentiated math word problems using the SOLVE (study the problem, organize the facts, line up a plan, verify your plan with action, examine the results) strategy. Students were working together having discussions on lining up a plan. In a sixth-grade social studies lesson, students worked on developing claim and counterclaim arguments prepping for essay writing on the Neolithic Revolution. The teacher had two students model one yes claim, one no claim to prep students for the next part to develop their own claim in relation to the prompt. Teacher-to-student discussion only led to uneven engagement as two students were called on twice and others did not have an opportunity to speak. During a second-grade math lesson on using a number line to find the difference, students sat on the rug and were given turn-n-talk opportunities to discuss. High levels of student thinking and participation were evident, but not across the vast majority of classes.

- In a fifth-grade math lesson, student groups rotated to different stations to work on different types of math problems while the teacher worked with an identified small group on lowest common denominator. The teacher timed students and prompted moves to different stations. A partner talk prompt was displayed in front of the room to guide student conversations with peers about math problems. Some partner talk was evident; however, it was not consistent across all tables. Groups were created based on data; however, with exception of small-group instruction, differentiation was not clear as each group rotated through all stations. Students demonstrated high levels of thinking and participation by collaborating with peers; however, student ownership was missing.
**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 and faculty ensure that curricula are aligned to Common Core Learning Standards and the instructional shifts. Curricula and tasks are planned and refined using student work and data.

**Impact**

Thoughtful decisions in choosing curricula such as *Expeditionary Learning* build coherence and promote college and career readiness for all students so that a diversity of learners, including English Language Learners (ELLs) and students with disabilities, have access to the curricula and tasks and are cognitively engaged.

**Supporting Evidence**

- Review of curricular documents revealed alignment to the Common Core Learning Standards and State content standards where applicable, as well as integration of the instructional shifts across grades and content areas. The school uses the *Expeditionary Learning* curriculum for reading and writing. In math, *GOMath!* is used as is *Pathways to Social Studies* curriculum. In a second-grade math lesson plan, students build numeracy skills using a number line to find the difference. In a sixth-grade social studies lesson plan, students will gather, interpret, and use evidence from primary and secondary sources to develop a claim, counterclaim, and rebuttal.

- A third-grade team of teachers met to review the mid-year English Language Arts (ELA) assessment and looked at patterns and trends. The results were tailoring lessons for afterschool and Saturday academy extended learning opportunities. Students were identified as having relative strength in fiction texts. Students did not go back to the text in order to find details that support their answer. As a result, teachers decided to model how to answer multiple questions and use prior State ELA exams to expose students to different genres, question types and citing evidence from the text to support responses. A short-response question had teachers making sure that students restate the question and are aware of what the question is asking. To facilitate understanding, teachers decided to circulate and confer with students as they explained their answers and their reasoning. The team also concluded that the next week’s shared reading expose students to informational text, recipe, poetry, and fiction. The team adjusted curricula across the grade to address the needs that were revealed as a result of this mid-year ELA assessment analysis.

- There are multiple examples of teachers, across grades and content areas, that have adjusted curricula based on individual students’ and student groups’ needs. For example, a first-grade lesson plan, on grouping objects to show numbers to 50 as tens, includes a formative assessment and details of differentiated instruction outlined by three tiered levels based on the results of the formative assessment. Tier one is a Response to Intervention (RTI) group, supported with a place value chart and base-ten blocks, as students write numbers and model each number using base-ten blocks. Tier two includes base-ten blocks and instruction asking students to identify how many tens blocks, how many ones blocks, and how do they know? Tier three students use higher-order thinking skills to identify errors in Higher-Order Thinking (H.O.T.) problems and draw a correct answer as they identify what the mistake is and how they could correct it.
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 rubrics and checklists that are subject-specific and aligned with the school’s curricula to inform feedback to students. School leaders use common assessments to determine student progress toward goals.

Impact

Students receive actionable feedback regarding their achievement. Data from common assessments such as iReady and Fountas and Pinnell reading are used to adjust curricula and instruction.

Supporting Evidence

- Across classrooms, samples of student work products showed teacher written actionable feedback. Some examples of that feedback were from a sixth grade ELA essay: “Next time, let’s work on providing more thorough explanations using new and interesting vocabulary.”; from a sixth-grade science assignment, “Make sure your claim is developed from evidence you’ve collected through the entire lesson.”; from a fourth-grade math word problem assignment, “You did a great job using the SOLVE method with the word problem. Next time, work on using the correct spelling of the words from the text.” Teacher comments included on a personal narrative rubric includes, “You did well adding voice to your writing. Next time work on spelling and spacing between words.”

- Across classrooms, rubrics and checklists are used across grades and content areas as tools of support for student growth. Teachers and students use rubrics as assessment and feedback tools. Additionally, rubrics were used as assessment and feedback tools attached to work, as well as displayed on bulletin boards in hallways and in classrooms. Examples of rubrics and checklists range from those designed for specific assignments in science, social studies, math, personal narrative writing, and informational writing. Evidence of students’ use of these tools is posted on classroom walls, on hallway bulletin boards, and included with student work in portfolios. One student reported on their use of a rubric, “It’s telling me the standards that I’m supposed to reach. For this assignment, one standard that I got meeting standards on, provides documents to support. Organization is a standard that I need to work on, approaching standards, it’s not meeting standards yet.”

- Common assessments in math and literacy are used to determine student progress and considerations for schoolwide support. In reading, classroom teachers administer Fountas and Pinnell Reading Levels assessments, iReady, and the 100 Book Challenge to monitor student growth over time. In math, iReady and a baseline math assessment using a standardized test question format created by the math teachers, covering the most frequently tested standards over the last year, are used to determine groups and identify specific needs students may have that may be supported in smaller groups or academic intervention services. In writing, a baseline writing assessment in all ELA classes was used to identify student writing strengths and weaknesses. As a result of the common assessments, the school noted that students struggled with writing short-answer responses and with using content-specific vocabulary and grammar in their writing. The school chose a grammar-based curriculum to support the writing component across all the grades.
Additional Finding

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<th>Quality Indicator:</th>
<th>3.4 High Expectations</th>
<th>Rating:</th>
<th>Proficient</th>
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**Findings**

School leaders consistently communicate high expectations to the entire staff through feedback from classroom observations and a professional development plan. School leaders and staff consistently communicate expectations are connected to a path to college and career readiness.

**Impact**

Written feedback and support have increased teachers’ understanding and awareness of school leaders’ expectations around schoolwide instructional strategies. Communication with families through various venues provides opportunities for them to understand student progress toward meeting standards.

**Supporting Evidence**

- High expectations for teachers are communicated through frequent classroom observations by school leaders as they are provided feedback utilizing the Danielson *Framework for Teaching* as the standards for professionalism and high-quality instruction. In addition, teachers receive clear expectations from school leadership that outline schoolwide focus on the workshop model of instruction by launching the reading and writing workshop. School leaders also outline expectations regarding the mini-lesson and the work period centers. School leadership monitors their expectations with classroom observations designed to specifically focus on these expected schoolwide instructional strategies. A professional development calendar makes clear that school leaders support teachers in their understanding of expectations in addressing topics such as Aligning Speaking and Listening to the Danielson *Framework for Teaching*, Intentional Planning Using Speaking and Listening Standards, and Assessing Students’ Self-Assessment.

- The school promotes college and career readiness through scholar-led conferences. Students lead their conferences by discussing their report card along with strengths and areas that they need to work on to reach their academic goals. Students are required to attend with their parents in order to lead their scholar-led conference with their parents and teachers. As one student shared, “At the scholar-led conferences, the student leads the conference, and we talk about our grades.”

- The school communicates with parents through a variety of ways: phone calls, emails, flyers, Jupiter Grades, home communication red folders that have to be signed by parents, workshops, monthly meetings with the principal during a morning and evening session. Parents spoke of receiving phone calls, emails, and text messages from the school on a regular basis. One parent shared, “In my son’s class, I could see where his goals were in the class, I had a good idea of his progress and what he needed to do to meet his goals. When we, the PA [Parent Association] meet, they give the guide, with information on how to support the kids.” Another parent reported about the workshops offered to parents, “The school offers workshops on curriculum, such as Math Curriculum Night, where they show you math strategies and we’re told to use with our child if they are struggling with something.” Another parent mentioned, “We receive a progress report before the report card. In middle school, we have Jupiter Grades to monitor assignments, grades and attendance. Tuesdays are parents’ outreach and we get to speak with our kid’s teacher and discuss any issue that the teacher sees in the classroom.”
**Additional Finding**

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

**Findings**

School leaders support teacher development with frequent classroom observation cycles and feedback from instructional coaches. Written feedback captures teachers' strengths, challenges, and next steps using the Danielson *Framework for Teaching.*

**Impact**

Formal and informal classroom visits result in written and verbal feedback for teachers that make clear the expectations for teacher practice and the supports available to help teachers meet them.

**Supporting Evidence**

- School leaders discussed a strategy of observation cycle planning that targets teachers based on individual need and includes calibration and monitoring through *Advance.* The professional development plan for this academic school year was created based on trends that were noticed in *Advance.* Adjustments to the plan are based on teacher feedback and on the administrative team's observations. According to multiple measures, including teacher *Advance* observation data, it was indicated that there is a need for intentionally planning for students to be engaged particularly in the areas of discussion and questioning strategies. As a result, professional learning opportunities were provided to address teacher pedagogical needs.

- Feedback to a teacher in an observation report includes, “Encourage students to build on each other’s responses by responding with a comment or a new question. Also, have students work on restating the question to guide their thinking.” Feedback to another teacher includes, “Use an informal checklist to assess conversations when conferring with students. This will allow you to elicit from students who have a clear understanding when solving word problems. The data will also serve as a tool to group students and drive your instruction.” In another observation report, “In the next few weeks, I would like you to consider what some of the ways you and your co-teacher can facilitate opportunities in which students can develop their own higher-order level thinking (HOT) questions to promote discussion among their groups.”

- Feedback is also presented to teachers from informal visits from instructional coaches, including National Training Network (NTN) coaches who work with teachers to strengthen their pedagogy, lesson planning, and best practices to advance student performance. Feedback from coaches includes next steps for teachers, for example, from a seventh-grade math lesson, “Provide times for students to think of real-world examples of percent. For example, before given the definition, ask students to brainstorm all of the places they may have heard or seen a percent. Students can brainstorm as a group and then share out.” A fifth-grade self-contained lesson includes informal feedback from the instructional coach, “For the independent stations, the teacher can provide answer keys so that students can check their work and self-assess. Provide a checklist with standards and worksheets or activities so that students see what they are working towards when completing work from their folders.”