Quality Review Report

2017-2018

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Principal: David Pretto

Dates of Review:
December 5, 2017 - December 6, 2017

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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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>To what extent does the school...</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 Celebration</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>
<td>Area</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>Additional Finding</td>
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<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>
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<tr>
<th>Area</th>
<th>Rating</th>
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<tr>
<td>To what extent does the school...</td>
<td>Area</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>
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<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>
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<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 Focus</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>
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Area of Celebration

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<thead>
<tr>
<th>Quality Indicator:</th>
<th>1.2 Pedagogy</th>
<th>Rating:</th>
<th>Proficient</th>
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Findings
Teaching practices reflect the belief that students learn best when there are frequent opportunities to engage in curricula-aligned, instructional practices and academic discourse using the workshop model. Teachers consistently use scaffolds and supports to provide multiple entry points into the curricula for students.

Impact
All learners, including students with disabilities and English Language Learners (ELLs) engage in challenging tasks and demonstrate higher-order thinking in meaningful work products.

Supporting Evidence

- Across most classrooms, the belief that students learn best when children talk, write, and come to consensus about their ideas abounds in student work products. In classrooms, across the upper and lower grades, teaching strategies focus on creating opportunities for students to speak and write together. In a seventh-grade English Language Arts (ELA) class, students used a protocol to annotate text and create questions to share, in a discussion of a writing piece by Kurt Vonnegut. This protocol was also used in a fourth-grade classroom, where students shared their thinking in small groups, and worked together to brainstorm what the ideal classroom would look like in a Leader in Me lesson. Other teaching strategies to foster collaboration and discussion within the workshop model were also widely observed in classrooms, such as the turn and talk in a third grade dual language social studies lesson on latitude and longitude. The teacher modeled how to use the prime meridian to find a global address. Students worked with partners to test out strategies and have text-based discussions aligned with the school leader’s and teacher’s beliefs about how students learn best.

- Similarly, in an ELA class, second graders focused on non-fiction writing. The teacher modeled the parts and order of a lab report for students at the rug, before sending them off to engage in a Round Robin discussion of their own work. The teacher reminded the students of the steps of the protocol: everyone shares, no interruptions, no repeats. This modeling and reminder about the discussion protocol quickly set students up to work during the period, so that students produced meaningful work products. In a coding class, sixth graders worked to create individualized projects using the coordinate plane to create image sprites, a collection of images put into a single image. At the beginning of the lesson, the teacher used one student’s image sprite and code to demonstrate the expectations for students, before sending them off to work on their own projects. As students worked independently, the teacher pulled a small group for further instruction, using the workshop model to meet the needs of all learners.

- School leaders and teachers shared that when scaffolding student learning for all students, including students with disabilities and ELLs, teachers ensure that tasks remain aligned to the grade-level standards. Across classes, students used scaffolds which include vocabulary, anchor charts, graphic organizers, and other supports to make sure that students have access to challenging tasks. In a second-grade science class, students were engaged in a read aloud, a turn and talk about what they heard, and a second read, before students were asked to write. This created a high-quality support for all learners before they were asked to demonstrate their thinking. In a sixth grade math lesson on ratios, students created their own charts and models, before beginning to solve problems in differentiated tasks.
Area of Focus

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<th>Quality Indicator:</th>
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<tr>
<td>4.2 Teacher Teams and Leadership Development</td>
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<td>Rating:</td>
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<tr>
<td>Developing</td>
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Findings

Teachers have yet to consistently engage in sustainable, inquiry-based professional collaborations to plan instructional next steps connected to the implementation of the Common Core Learning Standards. Teachers analyze the progress of their own target students’ work products and data.

Impact

Collaborations are building trust among staff, and teams are beginning to improve teacher practice, grade-level instructional capacity, and emerging in the process of increasing student achievement.

Supporting Evidence

- A review of team records demonstrate that teachers meet in regular professional collaborations using protocols. The middle grade ELA team records show that teachers have used a few different protocols for looking at student work, such as the Four A’s protocol that asks teachers to make assumptions, grapple with the text and reflect on their aspirations for student learning. The team was observed using a modified standards protocol to review an exam for questions that aligned to a reading for information standard on key ideas and details in non-fiction texts. Teachers independently reviewed student answers and contemplated why students may have missed a problem connected to the standard. Some shared whether or, not the student had annotated the texts in the exam, and what teachers might do differently in the future, in response to student learning needs. A teacher shared that this is a new protocol for the team. Teachers decided that they might use different strategies as a result of their review of student work, such as establishing a rubric for annotating text, having students read the questions before the articles, or highlighting key words in the questions. While teachers looked at student work, there is not yet sustained inquiry over time into a particular standard or problem of practice.

- At a separate meeting, a teacher shared that this new use of varied protocols to look at student work and class-level data is similar for other teams, such as one of the school’s math teams. In both cases, teachers do not yet track progress for groups of students. Instead, the teams are focused on getting teachers more comfortable looking at student work and data, thus beginning to result in improved teacher practice and progress toward goals for students.

- Teacher team protocols are shared with whole school to guide their teacher professional collaborations, rather than focus on cycles of inquiry. School leaders articulated that this is in response to a need to build rapport and trust amongst a newly merged staff, that were formerly teachers at two different schools, and staff new to Public School 96. At the observed team meeting, teachers shared that this is the most focused that the school’s teams had ever been and these collaborations serve as a productive time for sharing instructional strategies and processes with one another where trust is beginning to strengthen the instructional capacity of teachers.

- Across the school, teachers independently chart six week plans for their classes. At a question and answer session, a few teachers shared that reviewing and talking about student work with their team, is beginning to help them troubleshoot instructional next steps on their own. In addition, this process is helping them to think more deeply about student misconceptions and test sophistication strategies that they might begin to teach students, eventually leading toward progress toward goals for students.
Findings

Teachers consistently align units and lesson plans to the Common Core Learning Standards, with a focus on targeted standards in each unit. Tasks are rigorous and consistently emphasize higher-order skills across the grades, with a focus on citing textual evidence and deep conceptual understanding in math.

Impact

The curricula promotes college and career readiness skills, and is accessible to all learners, including students with disabilities and ELLs.

Supporting Evidence

- Lesson plans and units of study are aligned to the Common Core standards, often with a specificity on one or just a few “power” standards that are specifically selected to promote college readiness. For example, the lesson plan for a coding class centers on a computer science standard for constructing a program for creative expression. In addition, the lesson plan contains a few math content and practice standards for using math tools to graph points on a coordinate plane while solving problems.

- Units focus on the instructional shifts including deep understanding in math and on text-based answers across the content areas. A fifteen-day, seventh-grade math unit on proportional relationships focuses on two standards, one on computing unit rates associated with fractions, and another on making and demonstrating proportional relationships. The units contain an added focus on selected power standards such as solving real-life math problems using numerical and algebraic expressions and equations. Similarly, a lower grade ELA unit situates writing standard two as the priority standard on producing informative, explanatory texts. Furthermore, it includes an additional focus on standards connected to students’ ability to strengthen writing through peer editing and providing sources to answer a question from information gathered from several texts.

- As described in the units above, tasks within lesson plans are rigorous, often asking students to cite evidence from text, and explain their thinking, whether about literature, informational text, or to explain their mathematical thinking. A coding lesson plan reflects a task which requires students to apply coding concepts and mathematical strategies to create a piece of art. In an upper-grade reading lesson plan, students will annotate the text, and then develop questions, either of the text, or to ask one another about the text. The task calls for students to review previous text annotations, reflect on the quality of their questions against a set of criteria, and then to revise their questions, based on a second read of the text. The lesson plan contained supports for students with disabilities and ELLs including a vocabulary sheet, or a sheet with a continuum of higher-order thinking questions, consistently emphasizing rigor for all learners.

- Several math lesson plans reflect tasks which contain a range of skills to expose all learners in the analysis of problems. A math lesson plan includes a task which requires all students to create their own ratios using math manipulatives, and to explain their ratios using math sentences and written expressions. Some tasks include scaffolded sentences, or sentence starters for students to create ratio statements, while others were asked to describe the relationship between the circles and squares and write the ratio in three ways. This also demonstrates ways that teachers consistently emphasize rigorous habits, show attention to the instructional shifts, and provide access to expose a variety of learners, including students with disabilities and ELLs, to critical thinking.
Additional Finding

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

Rubrics and other assessments are aligned to the curricula and are used by teachers to gauge the level of student understanding across grades and subjects. Checks for understanding and student self-assessments are common, in-the-moment assessment practices visible across classrooms.

Impact

Written and online versions of next steps provide students with targeted feedback to help them improve their work. Tracking of student thinking and on-the-spot adjustments help to meet student learning needs in instruction.

Supporting Evidence

- Across classrooms and reflected in work products, it is evident that actionable feedback is provided by teachers, which inform students’ next steps. In ELA, the use of rubrics is common with students using a rubric or a connected checklist, the grading sub-components on the rubric, and curricula-aligned written next steps, to review the quality of their own work. In a written comment on a fifth-grade, three-paragraph response to literature, the teacher wrote, “It is clear that you understood the prompt and wrote a great topic sentence. Remember to use evidence from the text to support it.” This feedback, typical of other feedback that students receive on written assignments across the content areas, is aligned to the rubric, helped the student to see her strengths, and provided an actionable next step.

- Students shared that they receive grades and ongoing feedback from teachers through the Google classroom, where several online student work products showed teachers making in-text citations, or asking students questions to prompt revisions. A seventh grade student shared a science writing piece on global warming, that included a paragraph-by-paragraph checklist that aligned to a rubric, and comments from the teacher, with underlined pieces of the student’s writing, and teacher-provided next steps in red. One comment toward the end of the essay reads, “You can strengthen your conclusion by reminding the reader of both sides of the argument and briefly reflecting on the main points you mentioned in the essay.” These in-text citations, common across classes, provide the student with immediate actionable next steps. Teachers and students alike also shared that teachers use an online grading platform to give regular feedback on classwork, homework, projects, and tests. Students shared that the timeliness of the online grade postings and the one-on-one conversations that teachers have with them about how they have done on assessments, is a strength across the school.

- Although actionable feedback is provided across classrooms, students have yet to commonly demonstrate the utilization of their next steps in improving the quality of work products. During an interview, while actionable feedback was reflected in student work, only one student was able to use her portfolio to demonstrate growth in math from the baseline to other assessments.

- Across classrooms, teachers used checks for understanding, such as conferring and questioning students and used trackers to record student thinking to make future adjustments, as observed in an eighth grade ELA class and a second-grade science class. In other classes, teachers paused for a mid-workshop interruption to make an on-the-spot adjustment for students, as was observed in a seventh grade ELA class. Additionally, in a third-grade social studies class, the teacher paused student groups to make an adjustment to the model that she provided, and guided students to label parts of their map. This adjustment helped students to self-correct their own maps and set themselves up for the remainder of the class.
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 ensure that teachers and staff understand the schoolwide expectations through regular written communication and discussions. Guidance counselors and teachers communicate regularly with families about their children’s progress and the middle and high school articulation processes.

Impact

Teacher support on the national board professional learning standards (NBPTS) promote the achievement of high expectations, and are held accountable by school leaders. Parents work closely with staff to understand the progress their children make toward college and career readiness.

Supporting Evidence

- School leaders consistently communicate high expectations for teachers and staff that include attention to the NBPTS. The principal shared that the school uses the standards to inform their professional learning, with a focus on developing a staff culture that is focused on accomplished teaching. Professional learning agendas show sessions that are used to set expectations for classroom instruction, collaborative inquiry work for teacher teams, and communicating with families using the NBPTS standards and protocols, in addition to the components in the Danielson Framework for Teaching. Professional learning sessions also include the Round Robin protocol that teachers are expected to use to foster academic discourse with students in the classroom. The school leaders hold teachers accountable for these expectations through participation in and review of teacher team minutes and teacher observations.

- School leaders also use a protocol to conduct short, classroom walkthroughs, with a focus on academic rigor for ELLs. After the observations, school leaders email teachers feedback about what was evident in the classroom observations, as well as teachers’ use of discussion protocols, such as the Round Robin, or the Novel Ideas Only protocol. In one feedback email shared, the administrator noted that the four areas of focus were evident in the classroom, and as a next step, asked the teacher to use a timer to define equal amounts of time for students during the Round Robin. These walkthroughs and the formal feedback given that aligns to the Danielson Framework for Teaching, creates an additional system of accountability for ensuring that teachers attend to the expectations for ELLs and classroom discussions.

- At a parent meeting, communication to help families understand their children’s progress was noted as a strength of the school. Parents shared that school leaders and staff consistently communicate their children’s progress and expectations through the school’s online grading platform, texts, emails, phone, and in person, on Tuesdays. Teachers send home monthly letters about topics and texts in the curricula or use an online platform to share the week’s learning and pictures of the classroom. In addition to report cards, the school sends home regular progress reports through the online grading system. Parents shared that many teachers post the homework online, which they found to be a great help in supporting their students at home.

- Parents noted that there is ample support in helping to select the right middle or high school. As one parent shared, “They helped so much. There were meetings, and open school nights. The guidance counselor is really on top of it, and does everything she can to make sure we are done with the applications early.” Another parent also praised staff for taking groups of students to visit high schools, as it helped parents and students feel confident about their choices.
Additional Finding

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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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Findings
School leaders support the development of teacher practices through frequent cycles of observation that includes analysis of student work and data. School leaders provide feedback that reflect strengths and next steps in the form of glows and grow, after observing lessons.

Impact
Through observations, professional growth is promoted, and expectations are made clear, so that teachers continue to develop their pedagogical skills.

Supporting Evidence

- School leaders conduct frequent cycles of teacher observation. The principal and assistant principal observe all teachers throughout the year, and schedule visits where the principal sees every teacher, at least once. Additionally, school leaders ensure that they both spend time observing together in the grade bands, norming the observation of classroom practices across the early childhood, elementary, and middle school classrooms. At the time of the review, most teachers had already been observed twice, ensuring that teachers receive feedback, promoting professional growth and reflection.

- Teachers shared, and observation records confirm, that a discussion of student data or work is always a part of the feedback conversation between the teacher and administrator. When an administrator leaves the classroom, they send a calendar invite to the teacher, and schedule a time to review the lesson’s glows and grows, and student work produced during the period that the teacher brings, or that the administrator photographed during the lesson. At a question and answer session, teachers shared that the feedback that they receive is effective, and that, “There is always an actionable step that I can take, or a new strategy that I can try to help me improve my rating in the next lesson.” Another teacher shared that they always leave time for reflection and questions during the conference, deepening teacher understanding of the Danielson Framework for Teaching.

- Written feedback clearly articulates expectations connected to the Danielson Framework for Teaching, and the school’s instructional focus on academic discourse. Observation records reflect clear glows and grows for teachers, usually about expectations for rigorous tasks or questioning and teachers’ use of protocols to facilitate academic discourse, such as the turn and talk or the Round Robin discussion protocol. In one observation record, a teacher was applauded for the high levels of student engagement in a brainstorming activity and the appropriateness of the graphic organizer for the task. Her grow was to incorporate the Round Robin protocol in the “We do” section of the workshop model to create additional opportunities for students to share their ideas with one another. Feedback, with this level of specificity in use of strategies during a particular point in the lesson, was common across observations, elevating school-wide instructional practice, and aligned to the school’s expectations.

- Across grade levels, teachers praised the feedback given by administrators for being specific and actionable and connected to specific competencies in the Danielson Framework for Teaching, such as using assessment in instruction. A grow given to a teacher suggested the use of a protocol to allow for student self- and peer-assessment to free up the teacher and focus on students in need of more intensive supports in the classroom. The specificity of a protocol or strategy was seen across observation reports shared during the review.