Quality Review Report

2017-2018

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Manhattan
NY 10025

Principal: Aracelis Castellano-Folk

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

Lead Reviewer: Clarence Williams Jr.
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><strong>To what extent does the school...</strong></th>
<th><strong>Area</strong></th>
<th><strong>Rating</strong></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<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 Celebration</td>
<td>Well Developed</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>
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### School Culture

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>To what extent does the school...</th>
<th>Area</th>
<th>Rating</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1.4 Maintain a culture of mutual trust and positive attitudes that supports the academic and personal growth of students and adults</td>
<td>Additional Finding</td>
<td>Proficient</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3.4 Establish a culture for learning that communicates high expectations to staff, students and families, and provide supports to achieve those expectations</td>
<td>Additional Finding</td>
<td>Proficient</td>
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### Systems for Improvement

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<thead>
<tr>
<th>To what extent does the school...</th>
<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>
<td>Proficient</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3.1 Establish a coherent vision of school improvement that is reflected in a short list of focused, data-based goals that are tracked for progress and are understood and supported by the entire school community</td>
<td>Additional Finding</td>
<td>Proficient</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4.1 Observe teachers using the Danielson Framework for Teaching along with the analysis of learning outcomes to elevate school-wide instructional practices and implement strategies that promote professional growth and reflection</td>
<td>Additional Finding</td>
<td>Proficient</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4.2 Engage in structured professional collaborations on teams using an inquiry approach that promotes shared leadership and focuses on improved student learning</td>
<td>Additional Finding</td>
<td>Proficient</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5.1 Evaluate the quality of school-level decisions, making adjustments as needed to increase the coherence of policies and practices across the school, with particular attention to the CCLS</td>
<td>Additional Finding</td>
<td>Proficient</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
### Area of Celebration

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Quality Indicator:</th>
<th>1.1 Curriculum</th>
<th>Rating:</th>
<th>Well Developed</th>
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#### Findings

School leaders and teachers ensure that curricula are aligned to Common Core Learning Standards and strategically integrate the instructional shifts. Curricula and academic tasks consistently support rigorous habits and higher-order skills that demonstrate coherence across grades.

#### Impact

Students have access to a coherent curriculum that emphasizes college and career readiness. In addition, rigor is developed across classrooms through learning through tasks that have students demonstrate their thinking.

#### Supporting Evidence

- **To support higher-order thinking skills,** teachers created units to reflect rigor and Common Core Learning Standards and instructional shifts. An example was provided by the math department. A grade one math unit overview included students working on the Common Core Learning Standards that include solving addition and subtraction story problems, adding commutative and associative properties, and solving addition and subtraction problems by counting on and back. The unit also demonstrates various high-level Webb’s Depth of Knowledge (DOK) questions such as “Can you provide a mathematical justification?” and “Can you design a mathematical model to show your thinking?” To support coherence, every unit reviewed in math, English Language Arts (ELA), science and social studies reflected the use of DOK questions. This was impactful as students were required to show their thinking and provided justification for their answers in math classes visited. The plan also includes students with disabilities working with different sets of numbers using math games. English as a New Language (ENL) students are supported by having stories paraphrased as needed. In addition, fluency shifts and citing text-based evidence is evident in all units for the core subject areas.

- **To support college and career readiness,** the school has a focus on literacy across the content to develop student thinking. A grade five lesson plan required students to build theories and draw conclusions about characters based on textual evidence and prior knowledge. The connection section of the lesson states, “Students learn why today’s instruction is important to them and how the lesson relates to their prior work as well as the world beyond.” The unit draws a connection to text-based reading and knowledge-based learning. A student stated, “Knowledge-based is what we know about the world, based on what we read.” Another student stated, “Improving reading and understanding helps us become better learners and one day be good college students.”

- **ENL and students with disabilities are supported in the curriculum by demonstrating their thinking across all grades.** In a grade five writing unit, individualized supports are recorded for students with disabilities. Each student has different goals. For example, for one student, the goal was to re-read writing for missing words and repeated ideas. Another student’s goal was to revise writing for repeated ideas and word endings. Additional examples of how student support was seen in an ELA unit. ENL student supports reflected various supports, such as providing sufficient support time, vocabulary supports with definitions and pictures, and having a book discussion before writing a response. To ensure coherence, teachers use planbook.com as a framework to support ENL students and students with disabilities. The online planning tool has a section for individualized differentiation and differentiation assessment. As a result, all lessons and units provided individual supports for ENL and students with disabilities, so that all students could meet learning goals.
Findings

Teaching practices reflect a clear approach to teaching and learning that is aligned to the Danielson Framework for Teaching. Various teaching practices are used to support all students, including ENL students and students with disabilities, though strategies are not yet strategically integrated or completely consistent across all classes.

Impact

In some cases misalignment with established teaching practices prevented students from engaging in the lesson and producing meaningful work products. Students demonstrate higher-order thinking skills in most classes visited, although extensions were not incorporated into instructional practices.

Supporting Evidence

- Teachers have stated that students learn best through engagement. Student engagement was evident in most classes visited. During an observation of a grade five ELA class, students were observed in a discussion on the book *Esperanza Rising*. Students were discussing inferences in small groups. One student stated, “We’re reading to make inferences to meet our reading goals.” When asked what a student inferred from the reading, a student stated, “Because of what the author said I can infer that the father died.” Another student stated, “I agree because of the text clues I can infer that the father was killed.” This level of engagement was not evident in the vast majority of classes visited. In an ELA class, students were involved in a lesson on how characters face problems. The lesson was teacher-centered. Students were provided little opportunity to discuss their characters or the challenges they face.

- Some teachers used multiple entry points that incorporate different strategies to support learning for different students. In a grade three math class, students were observed working in pairs to solve three-digit subtraction story problems. Students were using different strategies to accomplish their task. During an observation of one pair, a student stated, “I know the key information found in the word problem is ‘How many pages does she need?’” Another student stated, “I’m using rounding.” Another student used base 10, while another student was working with the removal strategy. The teacher stated that ENL students worked with base 10 for visual support. Although multiple entry points were evident in the lesson, it was not evident in all classes visited. For example, a grade 5 math class was writing an essay using rubric and checklist. All students used the same scaffolds without differentiation.

- In a grade four writing class, students were observed demonstrating higher-order thinking skills. The objective was for students to write about what caused the French and Indian war. The teacher asked students to turn and talk on what they want their audience to learn. One student stated, “As a writer, I learned what caused the war and what ended the war and as a writer I need to elaborate on it.” Another gave the teacher feedback on her writing stating, “You have to explain what the bold words mean.” The student further stated, “What interested me about your writing was the impact the war had on history.” The lesson allowed students to critique the teacher’s example text to understand how they can become better writers. Although students display higher-order thinking skills by engaging each other, extensions were not evident to support students who finished their work early.
Findings

Across classrooms, teachers use assessments and rubrics that are aligned with the school's curricula. Teachers use common assessments to determine student progress toward goals across grades and subject areas.

Impact

Teachers use rubrics and student work to provide actionable feedback to students regarding student achievement. Assessments are used to make instructional adjustments to positively impact student learning.

Supporting Evidence

- Teachers make adjustments to teaching practices based on assessment results. A grade three unit two pre-assessment in math demonstrated that students need to work on addition and subtraction patterns by adding sums up to twenty using mental math strategies. As a result, teachers incorporated activities that included addition bingo and target twenty, a game that required students to reach answers of twenty. In literacy, teachers use running records to track reading progress. Students who are reading below grade level are placed in small groups. A small group calendar for a grade six class showed that students who were reading below grade level had a weekly plan with targeted instructional practices. For example, one group worked on analyzing a mentor text and chunking. Another group worked on writing non-fiction texts using graphic organizers. Teachers have stated that this method has allowed for an 18 percent growth in ELA state assessments.

- Rubrics are used to provide glow and grows for students, thus providing actionable feedback. On a grade five opinion writing rubric that has levels one to four, a student was rated three in the areas of transitions, ending and organization. The glows included “I love that you use multiple pieces of evidence to support your reasons.” The grows included “Try to use metaphors to further strengthen your reasons.” An additional example was seen in an essay on astronauts. The glows included “The subtopics support the main idea and that personal opinion on the topic was evident.” The grow was “Reread the evidence in the body paragraphs and ask yourself, ‘What specific details can I add to my writing?’” One student stated, “The glows and grows provide feedback to help me improve my learning.”

- Students were using self-assessments in most classes visited. One example is a grade four opinion writing checklist. The self-reflection showed that the student checked off “Yes” for writing sentences to hook the reader, stating the claim and using words and phrases to glue parts of the piece together. The student checked “No” for separating sections of information using paragraphs and having an ending for the piece that restated and reflected the claim. The teacher stated that the checklist will be used to place the student in small group instruction to support his writing. An additional example was seen in a pre-assessment student reflection sheet for math. Under “Can you find the value of expression with parenthesis?” the student checked off “I can do this already.” Under “Can you fill in the blanks to make a set of equations true?” the student checked off “I need to read more carefully.” The teacher stated that the student will be given additional scaffolds and be placed in small heterogeneous groups while the progress will be recorded in logs.
Findings
School leaders communicate high expectations to the entire staff through the handbook and monthly newsletters. School leaders and staff consistently communicate expectations that are connected to college and career readiness to families.

Impact
There is a culture of learning that encompasses a system of accountability for high expectations. Families understand student progress towards college and career readiness expectations.

Supporting Evidence

- To communicate high expectations regarding college and career readiness, the guidance counselor held a series of meetings with parents on a one-to-one basis. Each meeting is recorded on an agenda with the student's and parents' name and signatures, and the notes that include the areas covered. One agenda from an October meeting showed the counselor covered the middle school selection process, scheduling tours and skills the student needs to improve on to build on knowledge. An additional agenda from November showed that the guidance counselor discussed high school choices and different majors that will lead to college choices. During a parent meeting, a parent stated, “The school helps prepare my daughter for careers by talking to the counselor about her talents and skills. She already knows that she wants to go to Harvard because of their law school.” Parents further stated that the counselor informs them of their child’s progress to meet their goals.

- The principal has stated that The Seven Habits, a list of practices for highly effective people that include being proactive and putting first things first, is the core value system of the school community. One method of communicating these habits is to highlight one of the habits per month via a school newsletter. In an edition from December, the principal stated that the habit for the month is synergize. She stated, “Students and staff have to show how they are synergizing to show the many talents through leadership rules in the classroom.” This was impactful as teachers have assigned leadership roles for students in most classes visited. For example, students have roles such as monitors and greeters. Every class visited was greeted by a student that articulated the aim and task of the lesson. An additional example was seen in a town hall meeting. The guidance counselor discussed habit one, being proactive. The guidance counselor drew a comparison to being proactive with being prepared for college and next steps by having documents and work completed. All staff was trained in The Seven Habits and incorporate it into their teaching.

- The principal uses the staff handbook to communicate high expectations to all staff members. The handbook highlights specific expectations, such as goal setting. The handbook states, “Teachers will be required to set goals for individual students throughout the school year. Goals will be set based on assessments and data collected during lessons.” This was evident as a teacher team looked at running records and set goals for students based on their performance. An additional expectation in the staff handbook included, “Build a positive and warm culture – they don’t care that we know until they know that we care.” This was impactful as most students interviewed stated that their favorite thing about the school was the teachers. When they were asked why, one student stated, “Because they care about us.” Another student stated, “They push us to do better because they care about what happens to us and they want us to succeed.” All teachers are held accountable for knowing the handbook and adhering to the policies.
### 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 have a comprehensive system to support teacher development at all stages. Prompt written feedback captures teachers' strengths, challenges, and next steps using the Danielson *Framework for Teaching*.

#### Impact

Teacher growth toward schoolwide goals is supported through effective feedback. Additionally, instructional walk-throughs result in written feedback for teachers that make clear the expectations for teacher practice and the supports available to help teachers meet them.

#### Supporting Evidence

- School leaders and principals have stated that the instructional walk-through is an integral part of teacher development and support. Walk-throughs are divided among teachers and administrators to provide a lens on instruction throughout the building. The schedule covers all classes and results in a shared expectation checklist to provide an overview of progress to teachers and leaders. An example of expectations across content areas included on the list are the use of anchor charts, clearly stated assessment criteria, the use of a data center for students that is clearly labelled, organized and updated, and accountable talk. Teachers have stated that the walk-throughs are effective in supporting instructional practice as expectations are clear. Supports include follow-up observations and model teaching.

- The teacher observation schedule has a cycle of four observations to support teacher growth. The observation schedule is designed so that every administrator observes every teacher at least once. An example was provided in a December informal observation of a teacher. Feedback was aligned to the Danielson *Framework for Teaching*. Developing areas from the framework included designing coherent instruction and growing and developing professionally. The feedback to the teacher included, “In the differentiation portion of your lesson plan, please identify students with Individual Education Programs and the modifications and supports to be implemented.” The principal also stated that students should be given a math checklist that shows the expected criteria. Data based on feedback from the cycle of observations, resulted in professional development in areas of the Danielson *Framework for Teaching* to support continued growth.

- In addition to the quarterly observation cycle, all teachers including first-year teachers are further supported by school leaders via informal observations. The principal used glows and grows to provide feedback. An informal observation on a math lesson recorded glows for the teacher, which included that all students were actively engaged, using manipulatives, and were able to explain their reasoning during a specific task. Grows for the teacher included “You missed an opportunity to introduce the new math vocabulary addressed in the unit.” The principal also stated, “Consider how you pair students and how each team will work on different math games.” An additional example of feedback of a first-year teacher was provided by the assistant principal. Feedback included, “Consider opportunities for students to self-assess and monitor their own progress.” She gave an example, stating that the teacher should consider having students reflect on how they worked toward their reading goal for that day. During a meeting, a first-year teacher stated that the feedback was helpful and supported her learning. As a result of the structured observation system, most teachers are rated effective in the observation cycle.
**Additional Finding**

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<th>Quality Indicator:</th>
<th>4.2 Teacher Teams and Leadership Development</th>
<th>Rating:</th>
<th>Proficient</th>
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**Findings**

Teacher teams consistently analyze data and student work for students they share. Distributed leadership structures are in place.

**Impact**

Teacher teams use the thin slice protocol to increase teacher capacity in writing instruction and to positively impact student performance. Teacher leadership results in action teams to meet teacher needs and provide opportunities for growth that inform decisions that support student learning.

**Supporting Evidence**

- Teacher teams across grades use the thin slice protocol to support student growth. The protocol looks at what students are doing well in, what they need help in, for all students, including those who are high-, medium-, and low-performing. During the observation of a grade one team meeting on writing, teachers were observed using the protocol to look at how comfortable students are with opinion writing. They looked at evidence from pre- and post-assessments. They noted that high-performing students did well in transitional words and elaboration, though they needed help in labels and sparkly words. Medium students did well at giving examples of their opinions, but also needed help in labeling. The low group did well in giving facts but needed help in stating opinions. The team decided to plan small group instruction for a two-week cycle to work with students on using sentence prompts, which will include pictures of the topic, alphabet charts, and a modified checklist. When asked what the impact of the team was, a teacher stated, “Collaboration and sharing resources.” Another teacher stated, “How to tier a lesson to meet the needs of each child.”

- Distributive leadership is supported within the school community with action teams that support teacher growth by having teachers take on leadership roles. Grade leaders are present on each team to facilitate the meetings and act as a liaison between teachers and administration. Action teams also include a lead teacher who creates a leadership notebook for parents and students. Impact of this was seen in a leadership day and night organized by teachers. This program included tours of the building, open classrooms for parents to visit and learning showcases highlighting instructional practices. An additional example of an action team was the development of a numbers talk professional development put together by a team of teachers. Based on student data, the teacher went to a professional development on number talks and came back to the school to train teachers on it. As a result, it has been incorporated into instructional practices.

- To further support distributive leadership initiatives, teacher teams look at administrative feedback to support schoolwide initiatives. The teachers meet to support peers based on feedback from instructional walk throughs. They work with individual teachers on updating data binders to ensure that they include tracking sheets, conferring notes, and running records. The team helps create deadlines for completion of binders and communicate with administration regarding progress. Other areas of support by the team includes professional development on leadership notebooks and the use of public data boards.