Quality Review Report

2017-2018

Robert E. Peary School
K-8 75Q075
16-66 Hancock Street
Queens
NY 11385

Principal: James Thorbs

Dates of Review:
March 6, 2018 - March 7, 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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</thead>
<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>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>Area of Focus</td>
<td>Proficient</td>
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</tbody>
</table>
## School Culture

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

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Area</th>
<th>Rating</th>
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<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, Well Developed</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, Proficient</td>
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## Systems for Improvement

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

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Area</th>
<th>Rating</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1.3 Make strategic organizational decisions to support the school’s instructional goals and meet student learning needs, as evidenced by meaningful student work products</td>
<td>Additional Finding, 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, 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>Area of Celebration, Well Developed</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, 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, Proficient</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Area of Celebration

| Quality Indicator: | 4.1 Teacher Support and Supervision | Rating: | Well Developed |

Findings
School leaders support the professional growth of teachers using cycles of observations. Feedback addresses strengths and challenges while including next steps for improvement.

Impact
School leaders have an effective system to observe teachers and support their practice through follow-up professional learning opportunities, resulting in the adoption of common instructional practices that promote professional growth and reflection.

Supporting Evidence

- The school leadership team has an effective observation cycle in place that supports the professional development of teachers and provides actionable feedback on instructional practices. Additionally, the school has instructional coaches that partner with teachers to provide pedagogical support and to share best instructional practices through informal peer to peer classroom observations and collegial feedback. Teachers report that participation in inter-visitations, along with meaningful feedback on formal observation by school leaders and non-evaluative feedback from coaches and colleagues, has strengthened their pedagogical practices in domain three of the Danielson *Framework for Teaching*. This is reflected in Advance data ratings from the 2016-2017 school year in which the school scored higher than the citywide average in all three subcomponents of this domain which focuses solely on classroom instruction, an indication that the school leaders’ observation cycle is having a positive impact on classroom instruction.

- The school’s instructional goals are clearly articulated in the school’s Comprehensive Education Plan (CEP) and shared with staff at the beginning of the school year. These include using high leverage instructional practices to ensure that all students, including English Language Learners (ELLs) and students with disabilities are progressing toward meeting the Standards. Additionally, teacher teams and instructional coaches have identified schoolwide best practices which are communicated regularly to school leaders to support the planning of professional learning cycles for staff. These include the use of questioning techniques and scaffolds to provide multiple entry points into the lessons and the use of thinking maps to support students with their writing. Trends and patterns in instruction are also shared with teachers during professional collaboration time.

- Teachers reported having meaningful non-evaluative post-observation conversations with school leaders, which resulted in follow up support in areas in which they needed to improve their practice. In addition, teachers further reported that they routinely have meaningful coaching conversations with their instructional coaches, which further serve as regular reminders to teachers of the schoolwide expectations for teaching and learning. A review of teacher observation feedback indicates comments to teachers that clearly articulate next steps for improvement and identify supports to improve their practice. For example, the next step from an observation of an English Language Arts (ELA) lesson was the inclusion of thinking maps to support students in developing their thoughts prior to starting their writing. The teacher was directed to observe a fellow staff member that is highly effective at employing this practice in her classroom.
Area of Focus

<table>
<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. Rubrics are created that align with the curricula across grades and subjects.

Impact

The use of rubrics allows teachers to provide feedback to students regarding their progress and performance. Common assessment data is used to assess students’ progress toward meeting the standards and inform revisions made to the curricula and pedagogy.

Supporting Evidence

- Across disciplines and grade levels, teachers use common assessments, rubrics and student checklists that align to the grade level curricula, Common Core Learning Standards, and content standards. Likewise, teachers align rubrics to grade level state assessments in ELA and math. Students stated that the use of exemplar writing samples in conjunction with teacher and peer feedback has helped improve their writing, and they feel that it is preparing them for the State ELA assessments in grades three through eight. However, a review of student work indicated that the quality of actionable feedback they received varied across grades and classes. Furthermore, students reported that the level of meaningful feedback is dependent upon the class or subject.

- Across grades and departments, teachers use common assessments to determine student progress toward achieving mastery of the standards, to identify trends in student achievement, and to make adjustments to curricula and pedagogy, accordingly. School leaders and teachers reported that the decision to adopt the workshop model of instruction was made after an analysis of assessment data and student work samples revealed that students were struggling to reach mastery in writing. Similarly, Fountas and Pinell data is used to identify students that require intensive intervention to improve their reading at primary level, such as placement in a reading recovery program. Likewise, teachers in grades three through eighth use Scantron Ed Performance Series assessment data to identify targeted learning objectives for each student in reading, math and ELA. Teacher teams generate color-coded reports which provides a visual of the gaps in achievement for teachers to create instructional groups and provide differentiated instruction to close the gap for struggling students.

- School leaders and teachers have decided to adopt the Student Annual Needs Determination Inventory (SANDI) assessment to align assessments to the curricula and to create consistency across grades and subjects in grades three through eight. Data is used to determine targeted instruction based on identified individual skill deficits that meet the Individualized Education Plan (IEP) goals. In kindergarten through second grade, the school utilizes Fountas and Pinell assessments to determine interventions for struggling readers. To promote the school’s philosophy of providing students opportunities to work toward mastery of a skill, a portfolio system is in place which allows students to gather evidence such as writing samples from across content areas to place in their portfolios so that both students and teachers can monitor their growth over time. Similarly, as a culminating activity in social studies and science, teachers have implemented fairs in which students present their work to faculty and peers.
### 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

There is a process in place to ensure alignment of the curricula to the Common Core Learning Standards and to plan rigorous academic tasks for all 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.

#### Supporting Evidence

- A review of curriculum documents across grades and subjects indicates evidence of teacher departmental teamwork to integrate the Common Core and instructional shifts in English Language Arts (ELA), math, social studies, and science. Across subjects and grade levels, students are required to make claims and cite supporting textual evidence to justify their stance on an issue when writing or during classroom discussions. Across classes, teachers require students to utilize thinking maps to help them organize their thoughts and engage them in meaningful text-based discussions, write from sources to make arguments, and promote the adoption of academic vocabulary. To foster higher levels of student discourse, teachers have identified prompts that encourage accountable talk and the inclusion of academic vocabulary and have embedded them into many of their lesson plans. Examples include prompts to help students respectfully disagree and to build upon one another’s thoughts.

- Staff members collaboratively work in teams to review and revise curriculum maps, unit plans, and lesson plans to ensure accessibility for all students. Teachers analyze student work samples and assessment data, including student portfolios to adjust lesson plans and curricula to include supports such as scaffolds and differentiated tasks. Teacher teams have created parallel standards-based or “standards” curriculum and “alternate” assessment-based curricula to ensure that the needs of students with disabilities, including New York State Alternatively Assessed (NYSAA) students are met and all learners have access to the curricula and are cognitively engaged. Teachers and instructional coaches conduct curriculum and student portfolio reviews monthly to ensure that rigorous tasks are included across grades and content areas and pacing guides reflect purposeful planning of instructional time. An alternate curriculum team was observed analyzing student thinking maps to determine the supports that could be put in place across subjects to help them improve their writing, such as sentence starters and additional visual aids.

- A review of meeting minutes and agendas indicates that teachers meet weekly in grade bands to focus on creating lessons that encourage student-centered conversations, providing whole class and individualized supports that allow multiple access points into the lesson through differentiation of tasks and enrichment for students. Teachers use data to create action plans for students who struggle and revisit interventions that are in place to assess students’ progress toward meeting benchmarks. Additionally, the school adopted research-based curricula for ELA and math to provide alternately assessed students with a foundational common core aligned program that has strategies to support severely intellectually disabled students embedded within the program. A review of lesson plans indicates that thinking maps are used by most teachers as a means to ensure that all students, including English Language Learners (ELLs), are cognitively challenged.
Additional Finding

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

Teaching strategies align to the schoolwide goal of providing small group instruction and multiple entry points into lessons through the use of scaffolds and common instructional practices so all learners can participate in rigorous academic tasks and high level discussion.

Impact

Employment of scaffolds and differentiated tasks result in students’ engaging in high levels of thinking and discussion. Across classrooms, instructional practices align to the shared beliefs about how students learn best.

Supporting Evidence

- In most classrooms, teaching practices align to the school’s articulated set of beliefs about how students learn best. One of the overarching schoolwide beliefs is that all lessons must include a “teaching point” or learning objective and higher order thinking questions to generate thoughtful discussion. Additionally, school leaders and faculty believe that students must be provided with ample opportunities to write productively and have adopted the use of thinking maps as a way to support students in organizing their thoughts coherently across grades and content areas. Likewise, pedagogy must also engage students in purposeful academic tasks and authentic discourse which emphasize high levels of rigor to promote college and career ready skills. School leaders and teachers identified the workshop model as the best way to align instructional practices to the schoolwide goal. The model, in conjunction with the use of thinking maps and questioning techniques, was observed being utilized across most classrooms.

- Across classes, students were observed participating in group and partner discussions utilizing accountable talk protocols to support students and keep them engaged in purposeful conversations. Similar instructional strategies and scaffolds were used to provide entry points into the lesson in other classes to engage students in appropriately challenging tasks. For example, in a second grade science class, the teacher explicitly modeled how to identify similarities and differences between seasons by thinking aloud his inferences using the smartboard to provide visual representations of summer and winter, then had students practice with a partner before having them compare and contrast independently. To support the varied levels in the class, the teachers grouped students by ability and provided them with differentiated materials that included texts at their reading level and sentence frames.

- In a fourth grade math class, students were required to work in collaborative groups to make fractional representations from a random sample of M & M candies they received from the teacher. Students were placed in groups determined by their math performance levels and provided with differentiated materials. A higher level group was required to answer more questions than the lower group and was provided with a challenge question as an extension activity. Similarly, to address the verbal learning needs of students in a kindergarten circle time lesson, students sang along with the teacher and support staff to be able to answer questions related to time and climate. When students were asked to demonstrate their understanding of the concept of time and weather, visual prompts were provide as a scaffold. The teacher was observed taking conference notes on their level of understanding to determine placement for grouping students for the latter part of the lesson.
**Additional Finding**

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

The school leaders and faculty consistently communicate high expectations to students and their families. A culture for learning is maintained that is unified and communicated across the school community.

**Impact**

Systems of accountability for students and partnerships with families ensure that all students and their families are aware of their progress toward graduation and college and career readiness.

**Supporting Evidence**

- School leaders and staff implement effective strategies for communicating high expectations about college and career readiness to ensure that all students are challenged to meet those expectations. The school leaders host college ready workshops to engage parents in discussions about curricula, pedagogy, and becoming college and career ready. In grades three through eight, the expectation is for students to be prepared for the next level by achieving at or above the benchmark on the school baseline performance assessments, which is represented by a 300 point increase from the beginning of the year assessment to the end of the year assessment on the commonly administered Ed Performance tests. Students reported that they need to work toward a 100 point increase each quarter on the performance assessments in order to achieve at or above grade level expectations.

- The school’s leadership team and faculty are committed to not only communicating high expectations to students but also to providing the ongoing support that is required for them to meet those expectations and promote students’ ownership of their academic work. All students reported that they are aware of the academic and behavioral expectations the school leaders and teachers have set and feel that they are being adequately prepared for the next level. The majority of students also noted that they participate in a career education program that is teaching them critical career skills such as resume writing. Moreover, students reported that at the time of the school visit, many were meeting with their guidance counselor to ensure that they are on track to graduate and prepared to apply for high school.

- Students and parents reported that they are aware of the school’s expectations to prepare all students for the next level that is connected to a pathway to college and career. They receive regular updates on students’ progress through traditional report cards, but most families opt to use the school’s online system which allows students and parents to monitor their progress on a regular basis. Parents expressed appreciation that they can also access information about their child’s progress and can keep abreast of upcoming events and workshops via an online behavioral reporting system, Class Dojo, which some teachers use to motivate students to participate at high levels in class. Parents noted that it is accessible on their phone and allows the ability to monitor their child’s progress in real time and communicate with teachers.
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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</table>

Findings

Teacher teams use common planning time to analyze student data and engage in inquiry-based professional collaboration by content area, embedding the Common Core Learning Standards into lesson plans and units of study.

Impact

Across grades and departments, teacher teams’ use of a structured protocol to analyze data and student work products has resulted in improvements in the implementation of the Common Core and instructional shifts as well as strengthened teacher instructional capacity and improved student achievement.

Supporting Evidence

- Teacher teams use a looking at student work protocol to review student work and analyze assessment data to make curricular and lesson plan changes that are aligned to the schoolwide goal of creating student-centered lessons. Teachers collaborate to create rigorous lessons that have students engage in purposeful academic tasks and authentic discourse, emphasizing high levels of thinking to promote college and career readiness. The grade band teams engage in inquiry work to examine the impact of specific instructional strategies on student achievement. After changes are made to units and lessons and implemented in classroom practice, the teams reconvene to assess which strategies had an impact on student learning. Strategies that are identified as effective in addressing a gap in achievement are then shared across grades and content areas. For instance, the common instructional practice of utilizing the workshop model and thinking maps across all grades and subjects embodies the school’s vision of ensuring that the Common Core Learning Standards and instructional shifts are being implemented across grade levels and disciplines. As a result, students are better able to cite textual details to support a claim or argument.

- Teachers reported that as a result of common collaboration time, there has been a positive impact on their professional practice and student learning as they have time to share and discuss specific pedagogical strategies and practices that can improve student engagement. Teachers reported analyzing formal as well as informal assessments, such as exit tickets and student conferencing notes, to determine how high levels of classroom discussion informed students’ stances on a topic of debate, impacting their ability to back their claims with sufficient supporting textual evidence. Teachers further noted that as teacher teams added supports for students and pushed them to use academic language and accountable talk, students responded positively and became more comfortable taking risks in the classrooms, strengthening their progress toward the schoolwide vision of increasing student discourse in all classrooms.

- Teacher teams meet regularly to analyze assessment data from a variety of sources, including end-of-unit assessments and formal New York State assessment results. School leaders and teachers also administer to students the *Scantron Performance Series* assessments for ELA and math to provide teacher teams with baseline data to inform changes to curricula and instruction. Likewise, the data is used to create instructional groups and provide targeted interventions for struggling students. Teacher teams use the data to identify three to five high leverage learning objectives to focus on to close the achievement gap. These practices have resulted in a 4 percent increase in the percentage of students scoring proficient on the ELA assessment at the middle school from 2015 to 2017 and 99 percent of students identified as adequately prepared for the next grade level as measured by the Next-Level Readiness index.