Quality Review Report

2017-2018

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Queens
NY 11101

Principal: Dionne Jaggon

Dates of Review:
May 10, 2018 - May 11, 2018

Lead Reviewer: Edward Hazen
The Quality Review Report

The Quality Review is a two-day school visit by an experienced educator. During the review, the reviewer visits classrooms, talks with parents, students, teachers, and school leaders and uses a rubric to evaluate how well the school is organized to support student achievement.

The Quality Review Report provides a rating for all ten indicators of the Quality Review Rubric in three categories: Instructional Core, School Culture, and Systems for Improvement. One indicator is identified as the Area of Celebration to highlight an area in which the school does well to support student learning and achievement. One indicator is identified as the Area of Focus to highlight an area the school should work on to support student learning and achievement. The remaining indicators are identified as Additional Finding. This report presents written findings, impact, and site-specific supporting evidence for six indicators.

Information about the School


School Quality Ratings

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Instructional Core</th>
<th>Area</th>
<th>Rating</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>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>Additional Finding</td>
<td>Proficient</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
## School Quality Ratings continued

### 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>Area of Celebration</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3.4 Establish a culture for learning that communicates high expectations to staff, students and families, and provide supports to achieve those expectations</td>
<td>Area of Focus</td>
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### Systems for Improvement

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

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

| Quality Indicator: | 1.4 Positive Learning Environment | Rating: | Well Developed |

Findings

The school’s approach to culture building, discipline, and social-emotional support is informed by the school’s belief statement, and training is provided to support the schoolwide vision of educating the whole child. Support services allow staff, students, and families to collaborate in addressing all students’ academic and social-emotional needs and fostering their adoption of positive habits.

Impact

The school leaders maintain a culture of mutual trust and positive attitudes that contributes to a personalized learning environment in which students are well known by adults, resulting in social-emotional learning that supports student growth and their adoption of effective academic and personal behaviors.

Supporting Evidence

- The school’s approach to promoting a positive and nurturing environment that is conducive to learning is rooted in its vision of making the school part of the community and the community part of the school. School leaders and staff members reported their belief that students are most likely to achieve at the highest levels when staff show empathy and support their social-emotional growth in addition to academics. To this end, the school has adopted Positive Behavior Interventions and Supports (PBIS) as a means to educate the whole child and create a respectful environment. Students reported that they feel the school is part of the community and that they have opportunity to have a voice in schoolwide decisions. For example, students reported that they created the acronym ARMOR (Academics, Respect, Management, Organization, and Responsibility) that embodies the school’s philosophy of promoting a positive school culture.

- The school has a structure in place to ensure that each student is known well by at least one adult. Additionally, there is a mentoring program in place for students who are at-risk socially and emotionally. Students are mentored by staff members who teach them coping skills and check in with them daily to encourage them to maintain a positive attitude and attend school every day. To promote regular daily attendance, the principal hosts monthly celebrations for students with perfect attendance. In addition, the school has a home visitor that assists the parent coordinator, counselor, and social worker in reaching out to families of chronically absent students to provide intervention and supports for them to attend school every day. Similarly, the school has a wide array of support services in place to build social-emotional growth and wellness, including on-site mental health services and a dental clinic. These facilities limit the need for student absences to attend appointments out of school. As a result, the percentage of students with a 90 percent or better attendance rate increased from 55 percent in 2015 to 68 percent in 2017.

- All staff members have been trained in Therapeutic Crisis Intervention and Supports (TCIS) to recognize symptoms of crisis in students and identify potential trigger behaviors. This professional development allows staff to intervene therapeutically by using de-escalation techniques and to teach students strategies they can employ to self-regulate their behaviors and make alternative positive choices. As a result, students are adopting effective personal and academic behaviors. During the school visit, a fifth-grade teacher was observed using the I ESCAPE de-escalation method (Isolate, Explore student’s point of view, Summarize the feelings, Connect behavior to feeling, Alternate behavior, Practice it, Enter back into routine) with a student who was exhibiting untoward behavior. As a result of this intervention, the student was able to return to class.
Area of Focus

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Quality Indicator:</th>
<th>3.4 High Expectations</th>
<th>Rating:</th>
<th>Proficient</th>
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Findings

School leaders and staff communicate high expectations connected to a path to college and career readiness to students and their families and provide supports so that students are prepared for the next level, with some students owning their educational experiences.

Impact

School leaders and teachers have created a culture for learning that communicates high expectations to students and their families, leading to students’ preparation for college and careers. The vast majority of students, however, have not yet taken ownership of their own learning.

Supporting Evidence

- School leaders and faculty provide workshops so that parents have insight into the academic expectations for their children at each grade level. Parents reported that school leaders and teachers consistently communicate with families using a combination of traditional means, such as backpack letters and online platforms, including the school website. Parents noted that teachers share timely information about their children’s progress in school, including online and with mobile applications to monitor student academic and behavioral progress. However, although the vast majority of students and parents at the middle school level use the online progress monitoring system, it is underutilized by families at the elementary level. Similarly, although parents reported that several workshops have been hosted to help families understand the curricula, the school has yet to successfully partner with them to see the clear connection between the rigor of the Common Core Learning Standards and a pathway to college and career readiness.

- Teachers and school leaders have established a culture for learning that communicates high expectations to students and their families. A school pledge was developed with students that is read every morning when the students assemble prior to the start of the school day. The principal stated that she meets with individual students and the student government regularly to remind them of schoolwide academic and behavioral expectations and the importance of adopting effective personal habits that will lead to college and career readiness. School leaders noted that staff and students have developed a sense of school pride and mutual respect. Students, teachers, and school leaders all reported that they have seen a difference in how the majority of the students feel about school and learning, noting that students are more engaged in lessons, actively listening and participating at higher levels than they were in the past.

- All fifth- and eighth-grade students reported that they feel prepared both academically and socially-emotionally for the next level in their educational careers. However, most of the students and parents were not aware of what level they scored on the New York State English Language Arts (ELA) and math assessments. Moreover, most of the students were not cognizant of the importance of scoring at mastery level on the State assessments to have a better chance of getting into a middle or high school of their choice, including highly ranked high schools. The vast majority of students have yet to demonstrate ownership of their educational experiences.
Findings
School leaders and staff have a process in place to ensure alignment of the curricula to the Common Core Learning Standards and include rigorous academic tasks that are accessible for a variety of learners.

Impact
The curricula reflect planning for the instructional shifts, including tasks with rigorous habits that build coherence across departments and grades and support college and career readiness for all learners. Teacher teams use a structured lesson design to ensure that all learners, including English Language Learners (ELLs) and students with disabilities, access lessons and are cognitively engaged.

Supporting Evidence

- Across grades and departments, the instructional shifts demanded by the Common Core are evident in curricular documents, including unit and lessons plans. Across disciplines, teachers require students to annotate their work, make claims and counterclaims, and cite text-based evidence to support their arguments. Schoolwide, leaders and faculty have made it a priority to require all departments to take into consideration the diversity of learning styles in their classroom by implementing the Universal Design for Learning (UDL) framework for lesson planning. Additionally, common protocols are embedded into unit and lesson plans to engage students in high levels of discourse, such as using Socratic seminars and providing accountable talk prompts. This further promotes coherence across grades and content areas and ensures that students are being adequately prepared for college and careers.

- School leaders ensure that inquiry teams meet to examine student work and performance data to inform revisions to curricula and academic tasks and ensure alignment to the schoolwide instructional foci, such as making real world connections through rigorous and culturally relevant curricula and pedagogy. A review of meeting minutes and agendas indicates that teacher teams meet to analyze student work products and data to identify patterns and trends and refine tasks to address identified gaps in student achievement. The school’s implementation of UDL requires lesson plans to include multiple entry points for students. Teacher teams are charged with identifying instructional strategies that have a positive impact on student learning and emulate the practices across departments to build coherence. For example, a grade six through eight vertical team was observed examining videos of Socratic seminar lessons to identify the level of questioning in relation to Webb’s Depth of Knowledge and how well students responded to peer-to-peer questioning. The team determined that some male students and ELLs did not engage at the same level as their peers. Therefore, instructional strategies and scaffolds were identified and embedded into lesson plans to increase engagement for all students, such as using a random number generator to select students to respond, ensuring students are equipped with well-annotated notes, and providing higher-level question stems.

- A review of curriculum maps, lesson plans, and units indicates that teachers plan for multiple entry points into lessons for a variety of learners. Teachers adjust curricula and identify scaffolds for lessons, such as graphic organizers, sentence prompts, and visual aids and cues. Some lesson plans include language supports for students with language development needs and modified materials for students with disabilities. For example, a writing workshop lesson identified the use of modeling, strategic grouping, and verbal cues and graphic organizers as ways to support students with disabilities and ELLs to meet the learning objective of the lesson.
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 schoolwide beliefs and provide entry points using leveled groupings and scaffolds so that all learners can participate in high-level academic tasks.

Impact

Students engage in high levels of thinking and discussion leading to the development of meaningful work products across classrooms. However, these practices have not yet fully been implemented across the vast majority of classes.

Supporting Evidence

- Across classrooms, teaching practices align to the school’s articulated set of beliefs about how students learn best. One of the overarching beliefs is that classroom instruction must engage students in purposeful, higher-order thinking and discussion by employing a measurable learning objective for every lesson and differentiating tasks and materials to allow all students to engage in the lesson. School leaders and teachers identified the workshop model as the best way to align instructional practices to these beliefs. Expectations are that all lessons should follow the format of “I do,” or modeling; “we do,” or whole group practice; and “you do,” independent or leveled group or partner practice. The workshop model was observed being utilized across classrooms and grade levels. Most students were observed participating in group and partner discussions utilizing turn and talk protocols and were provided with scaffolds, such as sentence starters, participation checklists and accountable talk stems, to keep them engaged in purposeful conversations.

- In most classrooms visited, lessons demonstrated a knowledge and understanding of students’ diverse needs, resulting in academic tasks and activities that engaged students in high levels of cognitive challenge. Most lessons included academic tasks and supports, such as scaffolds, and generated challenging discourse to engage all students, including students with disabilities and struggling students. However, high quality extensions were not observed in the vast majority of classes. If a student or group completed a task ahead of the rest of the class, they were directed to review their work or read. Likewise, high quality extensions were not referenced in the lesson plans.

- In an eighth grade ELA class, students were required to write poems using personification to bring to life their feelings and emotions, as evidenced in the construction of their poems. This task also served as the measurable objective for the lesson. The teacher grouped the students by their reading abilities and provided each group with an emotions and feelings “cheat sheet” that contained an extensive list of words they could choose. Groups were also provided with exemplars in English and Spanish, and students were given differentiated materials based on their abilities. The teacher explicitly modeled how she would construct her own poem and followed the “I do, we do, you do” model prior to having students work on their poems individually. The teacher visited each group to monitor the level of student discussion and provided help as needed. For example, the teacher was overheard asking a group, “What would stress look like? What would it wear?” Consequently, the use of multiple entry points ensured that all students were engaged in challenging tasks requiring higher-order thinking. However, high quality supports and extensions into the curricula were not seen in the vast majority of classes visited.
# Additional Finding

## Quality Indicator: 2.2 Assessment

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## Findings

Across classrooms, teachers use rubrics aligned to the Common Core Learning Standards and school curricula. Across grades and subject areas, the school uses common assessments to determine student progress toward goals and/or meeting proficiency based on the content area standards.

## Impact

Across grades and subjects, assessment results are used to adjust curricula and instruction. While teachers analyze student assessment data to provide actionable feedback to students and teacher teams regarding student achievement levels, feedback is not yet meaningful for the vast majority of students.

## Supporting Evidence

- Teachers create rubric-aligned, student-friendly checklists to provide opportunities for students to assess their progress toward meeting writing proficiency across grades and subject areas. Additionally, a review of student work samples showed evidence that most students receive rubric-based feedback with next steps to improve their writing, such as “next time hook your reader by using higher-level action words such as rapidly rather faster” and “you provided sufficient evidence to support your claim, but additional evidence is required to make your counter claim stronger.” Likewise, as part of the Teachers College Reading and Writing Program (TCRWP), teachers hold regular conferencing sessions with students to discuss their progress and how they can continue to improve. Teachers were observed conferencing with students across most of the classrooms visited, providing them with suggestions to improve their writing with explicit examples such as modeling how using transition words could “improve the flow of their writing.” While some students stated that the feedback they received in writing on their work and verbally during the conference sessions has helped to improve their reading and writing, other students were unsure of their next steps to meet proficiency.

- Teachers regularly administer standardized assessments such as the DRA and Fountas and Pinnell benchmarks to identify the instructional and independent reading levels of students and document their progress toward achievement of the standards. Additionally, teachers create common on-demand writing assessments used to measure student progress toward individual, classroom, and schoolwide goals. Summative and formative assessments are also analyzed to adjust curricula and instruction during weekly inquiry-based meeting time. The results of these assessments allow teachers to determine leveled instructional groups, evident in lesson plans and classroom observations.

- Teachers also engage in supplemental assessments of student progress, such as watching videos of lessons to see how well students engage in peer-to-peer discourse. During an inquiry meeting, teachers used videos of students engaging in a Socratic seminar to identify which students struggled with articulating their thoughts. Teachers identified next steps to engage these students at higher levels, which included planning scaffolds such as discussion prompts and verbal cues. Teachers also discussed trends in student engagement across grades and subjects when students are required to engage in accountable talk sessions. Teachers referenced their student participation notes and noted that male students and ELLs tended not to participate at the same level as their peers.
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

The majority of teachers are engaged in structured, inquiry-based collaborations that align to the school goals and lead towards improved teacher practice.

Impact

Department, grade level, and vertical grade band teams meet frequently to analyze assessment data and student work products. Professional collaboration has strengthened teacher practice resulting in improvements in student learning across grade levels.

Supporting Evidence

- Grade level and department teacher teams collaborate to review student work samples and data. Teams use several data sources, including i-Ready diagnostic assessments and Developmental Reading Assessments (DRA), to revise curricula and academic tasks utilizing the Datawise protocol for analyzing data and student work. School leadership provides scheduled common planning time for collaborative teams to meet horizontally by grade level and vertically in grade bands from kindergarten through eighth grade. Teachers reported using their professional collaboration time to revise their pacing guides and work on vertical alignment of the curricula to the Common Core. Moreover, this time is also used to identify specific instructional strategies that can be used to help struggling students understand a concept, such as using the Frayer model or identifying possible misconceptions. For example, a grade-five science lesson on the study of mold noted a possible misconception for students that mold is not alive.

- Teachers and school leaders reported that collaborative teacher teams meet formally once a week. Teacher teams also meet during weekly professional development sessions as well as informally during common lunch or prep periods. A review of meeting agendas and minutes indicated that teacher teams frequently use the analysis of assessment data to inform whole class instruction and plan for individual and small group instruction. For example, most teachers use the information to create ability-based instructional groups that require additional supports or targeted intervention and identify them in their lesson plans as “support” and “intensive” groups. Teachers also noted that common planning time is frequently used to create materials and instructional resources that support students’ content knowledge and skill development such as scaffolds, including graphic organizers, writing prompts, sentence frames, and visual aids. To assist teacher teams, school leaders have provided professional development through consultation with outside educational experts and on-site coaching in effectively analyzing student assessment data and implementing the TCRWP workshop model.

- Teacher teams meet consistently to analyze assessment data to identify patterns and trends in student achievement schoolwide. School leaders and teachers reported that they decided to adopt the TCRWP and Fundations reading intervention programs after analyzing kindergarten through second grade reading data. This data revealed that students were struggling with phonemic awareness and decoding words, a trend that continued throughout the grades, negatively impacting student writing. Similarly, data analysis led to a prioritized instructional focus on the differentiation of curricula and provision of supports for ELLs, after the data revealed that ELLs were performing below their peers in reading and writing.