Quality Review Report

2017-2018

J.H.S. 210 Elizabeth Blackwell
Junior High-Intermediate-Middle 27Q210
93-11 101 Avenue
Queens
NY 11416

Principal: Bonnie Butcher

Dates of Review:
March 15, 2018 - March 16, 2018

Lead Reviewer: Rod Bowen
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

J.H.S. 210 Elizabeth Blackwell serves students in grade 6 through grade 8. You will find information about this school, including enrollment, attendance, student demographics, and data regarding academic performance, at http://schools.nyc.gov/Accountability/tools/report/default.htm.

School Quality Ratings

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Instructional Core</th>
<th>Area</th>
<th>Rating</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>To what extent does the school...</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1.1 Ensure engaging, rigorous, and coherent curricula in all subjects, accessible for a variety of learners and aligned to Common Core Learning Standards and/or content standards</td>
<td>Additional Finding</td>
<td>Proficient</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1.2 Develop teacher pedagogy from a coherent set of beliefs about how students learn best that is informed by the instructional shifts and Danielson Framework for Teaching, aligned to the curricula, engaging, and meets the needs of all learners so that all students produce meaningful work products</td>
<td>Area of Focus</td>
<td>Developing</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2.2 Align assessments to curricula, use on-going assessment and grading practices, and analyze information on student learning outcomes to adjust instructional decisions at the team and classroom levels</td>
<td>Additional Finding</td>
<td>Proficient</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
## School Culture

<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>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

## Systems for Improvement

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>To what extent does the school...</th>
<th>Area</th>
<th>Rating</th>
</tr>
</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>Area of Celebration</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>1.3 Leveraging Resources</th>
<th>Rating:</th>
<th>Proficient</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>

Findings

Resources are thoughtfully allocated to support the school’s goals regarding critical thinking, student engagement, and college and career readiness. Staffing and student programming decisions are aligned to the school’s vision for promoting student achievement.

Impact

Students use technology and other strategically acquired resources that increase their ability to produce meaningful work products. Staff assignments, hiring decisions, and programming support students and provide them with access to opportunities that lead to college and career readiness.

Supporting Evidence

- The school collaborates with a community-based organization that provides youth development programming, parent outreach, and other initiatives that promote a future-oriented mind-set. This partnering organization has coordinated college visits, guest speakers, and college fairs.

- A significant investment has been made in technology. In addition to electronic whiteboards in every classroom, all teachers have been provided with laptops. All science and English Language Arts (ELA) classrooms, as well as those designated for students with disabilities, contain laptops for each student. A student noted that they use the computers in science to do research. A science teacher noted that the laptops enable students to look up images and videos that deepen their understanding of science concepts. They are now more able to write about and discuss these topics than they were before. A technology teacher was hired to provide direct instruction as well as support other teachers in the meaningful inclusion of technology in their lessons. One teacher commented, “I have never seen someone use money in such a positive way.”

- Cornell notebooks were purchased for all students in support of the school-wide expectation regarding notetaking. The use of these notebooks was referenced in numerous lesson plans across grades and subject areas. A review of student notebooks showed that they are writing key topics and themes on the left while capturing relevant examples and supporting evidence on the right. Students asserted that they used these notebooks while doing research, both in science and in social studies.

- The school is divided into academies. Each academy has its own assistant principal, dean, and school aide. There are 22 accelerated classes across the academies, enabling students to take higher level courses in various subject areas. The New York State Regents courses Living Environment, Integrated Algebra, United States History, and English are available to high performing eighth grade students. Highly effective teachers have been programmed to serve English as a New Language (ENL) students. The teacher assigned to the English Language Learners (ELLs) with lower level English proficiency is a native Spanish speaker. Every official class has Academic Intervention Services (AIS) built into the program.
Findings
Across classrooms, teaching strategies inconsistently provide effective questioning, scaffolds or prompts to engage students in curricular tasks. In addition, student work and discussions during instruction reflect uneven levels of thinking and participation.

Impact
Students, including ELLs and students with disabilities, exhibit uneven levels of engagement and higher-order thinking in appropriately challenging tasks.

Supporting Evidence

- During an ELA lesson, students engaged one another as they analyzed a poem. When the teacher asked who the poem was comparing the reader to, a student responded by stating that the poem was comparing the reader to technology. A peer disagreed and asserted that it was comparing technology to being enslaved. Students annotated the poem with notes on rhyme scheme and the use of metaphors. As the teacher circulated throughout the room, he encouraged students’ thinking by asking them why they gave certain answers and to reflect on their understanding of quatrains. Such high levels of engagement and thinking were not apparent across classrooms.

- A math class began with a problem of the day. However, a number of students spent that time copying information off of the board rather than trying to solve the problem. For much of the lesson, most of the questions asked by the teacher were closed ended and process oriented. Questions included “What’s the next step?” and “Anyone remember how to find the volume of a cone?” Math concepts were not referenced. Although they understood how to calculate volume, none of the students could explain why cubic units were used to measure it.

- A teacher dominated a lesson in an AIS class, speaking for more than 15 minutes. During that time, he repeatedly called on the same two students to answer questions, ignoring other students who had raised their hands to volunteer or offer unprompted input. Students sat in groups, but were not encouraged to interact with each other to engage in the collaborative task as designed.

- The learning objective for a social studies lesson was for students to identify ways that events are related to one another by categorizing event cards under the headings: cities, organized central government, job specialization, and public works. The cards contained topics such as founding of Rome, Wang Mang became Emperor, and the Zhengguo Canal. Students were to glue the cards under the correct headings on large chart paper. In an effort to support the group work, the teacher provided the class with a model of the completed project, which reflected information found on distributed sheets that showed the possible categorization of the cards. As a result, student groups merely recreated what was provided on the model and sheets without needing to engage in the classification work described in the learning objective.
Findings

School leaders and faculty make purposeful decisions to ensure that curricula are aligned to the instructional shifts and the Common Core Learning Standards. Curricular tasks consistently emphasize rigorous habits and higher order skills across grades and subject areas for all students, including ELLs and students with disabilities.

Impact

The design of the curricula builds coherence, promotes college and career readiness, and ensures accessibility for a variety of learners.

Supporting Evidence

- An ELA lesson plan was informed by the Common Core Learning standard that requires students to analyze how a poem’s form or structure contributes to its meaning. The task was to analyze shape poems by discerning the subject, speaker, and how the shape is related to the content. An example revealed how the triangular shape of the poem serves as a metaphor for family: mother, father, and child. After the process is modeled, students would use annotation to analyze poems in groups.

- The rigorous habits of critique and revision were evident in a math lesson plan with the essential question, “How can you use a sample to gain information about a population?” Informed by a statistics and probability learning standard, the activity would begin with a mini-lesson on proportion, leading up to group work where teams would write out their collaborative process on a white board, then shift to another group’s work and annotate it, providing comments, questions and circling areas of disagreement. Upon returning to their original work, teams would discuss the comments and whether they agreed with them.

- The learning objective of a social studies lesson was for groups of students to analyze the cause and effects of the flapper generation by observing primary and secondary sources. The task design included groups rotating through stations, which included watching a video, listening to music, reading text, and viewing a political cartoon as well as other images. Questions would guide their analysis at each station. Author’s intent, prior knowledge, and connections to contemporary society were just some of the prompts that groups would address. The activity would culminate with a class-wide discussion based on the questions, “If you were a parent would you support your daughter becoming a flapper, why or why not?” and “If you were a daughter, would you become a flapper, why or why not?” Such learning experiences emphasize higher order thinking for all learners.

- Within the dynamic equilibrium unit of study of the human animal, content standards and the instructional shifts were used in a lesson plan where students would have to use evidence of how the body is composed of interacting systems to construct an explanation of how homeostasis is maintained. Questions embedded to prompt higher order thinking include, “Describe what happens when you exhale” and “What might happen if you punctured your chest cavity?”
Additional Finding

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

Findings

Assessment practices involving rubrics are aligned with the school's curricula. Common assessment data are used to determine student progress across grades and subject areas.

Impact

Students and teachers receive actionable feedback to inform next steps in teaching and learning. Data are used to identify small learning groups as well as to make other adjustments to curricula and instruction.

Supporting Evidence

- In discussing their use of rubrics, students noted that they tend to receive them before they get the assignment, one stating “So you know what you need to achieve.” They noted that at times they use them for peer editing. One student was clear that in order to earn a higher grade on an ELA assignment, he would have to use more evidence to support the point he was making. Another student spoke of the feedback she received in an analytical essay she had written. She was able to explain the highlighted sections of her scored rubric that reflected that her introductory paragraph included a strong opening and context, and that her use of conventions were followed with 85 percent accuracy. Although a few students were not able to speak with such clarity regarding the criteria found in their rubrics, most could share in general the levels of expectations found within the rubrics, and how they could use that understanding to improve their work.

- An English teacher used assessment data to assign ability based groups to analyze poem structure. Although the entire class worked on the same poem, the task was tiered as was support. For example, the lower performing group was to list the types of figurative language, while the higher performing group had to address how the ways in the use of figurative language affected the meaning of the poem. Another ELA teacher used data from a unit assessment to ascertain what was to be prioritized during re-teaching. The subsequent lesson plan showed that she would facilitate a shared reading and work with small groups on revisiting annotation like underlining key words and phrases that help identify key text evidence. Similarly, a social studies teacher used base line data to assign ability level groups related to text analysis skills. Lower performing students had to answer a question using evidence from the text, while higher performing students had to analyze documents, develop a claim, and support it with details from the text.

- Data from a science assessment was used to organize students into groups. Specifically, those who incorrectly answered questions regarding types of rocks were spread across groups so that they were with peers who understood the topic. The teacher then structured the group work so that those who misunderstood the topic had to present their ideas and receive clarifying feedback from the other group members.
Additional Finding

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

Findings

The school uses a number of modes to communicate high expectations regarding the use of assessments as well as student collaboration and discussion. Teacher teams and staff establish a culture for learning that consistently communicates high expectations for all students.

Impact

Teachers are accountable to these expectations through classroom observations and faculty meetings while support is provided via professional development and common planning. Students receive detailed guidance and feedback that prepares them for life after graduation as families are helped to understand their children’s progress.

Supporting Evidence

- Teachers shared that there was a focus on formative assessment and quality questioning during the beginning of the year. Takeaways from those sessions included using questioning stems aligned to the Common Core Learning Standards, and designing learning activities to assess for understanding. Teachers were provided with a packet of tools for formative assessment. The techniques listed for checking for understanding included the one minute essay, student conferencing, and think-write-pair-share. To support student to student discussion, teachers participated in Socratic seminar training.

- A review of classroom observation feedback shows a consistent emphasis on the school’s priorities regarding formative assessment and student discussion. In one report, it was suggested that the teacher continue using both divergent and convergent questions within lessons to invite students to formulate hypotheses, make connections, or challenge previously held views in discussion. The use of turn and talk was a point of feedback in a report, so as to decrease conversation between teacher and student, and get other students involved. Similarly, written feedback for another teacher noted that students were not given the opportunity to speak to each other and that students should be invited to respond to each other’s comments as well as to call on each other with minimal or no mediation by the teacher.

- An observation report referenced previous feedback regarding the use of a check for understanding spreadsheet. The teacher had not used it during the lesson that was observed and she was directed to visit a colleague to view her use of the strategy. Another teacher was advised to use an assessment checklist to record student misconceptions and mastery of concepts and skills being taught.

- Students concurred that they use an online grading platform to stay abreast of their academic standing. They stated that they can get assignment grades, class grades, as well as feedback from their teachers from the website.

- While reflecting on a college visit to an Ivy League University, a couple of students reflected on what they had learned. One noted that they were able to ask questions about paying tuition and scholarships. Another student said it made her question what she thought she wanted to study, stating, “It helped eliminate choices. I realized that I want to be a pilot.”
Additional Finding

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Quality Indicator:</th>
<th>4.2 Teacher Teams and Leadership Development</th>
<th>Rating:</th>
<th>Proficient</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>

Findings

The majority of teachers participate in structured, inquiry-based collaborations. Structures are in place to support distributed teacher leadership.

Impact

The work of teacher teams strengthens instruction while promoting school goals and the implementation of the Common Core Learning Standards. Teachers have opportunities to develop leadership capacity, and have a voice in decisions that impact teaching and learning across the school.

Supporting Evidence

- A teacher team looking at student written responses focused on analyzing the technique an author uses to develop the central idea. According to minutes from the meeting, patterns of strength across the samples included organization, paraphrasing by referring to the text, and making text-to-self connections. A number of students were challenged by citing text evidence, connecting literary elements, transitions, effective use of vocabulary, elaboration/explanation, and developing conclusions. Agreed upon next steps included providing exemplars that model how to write a literary response with a focus on transitions and conclusions, engaging students in simple elaboration activities, and emphasizing the use of more academic vocabulary. Such analysis allowed for a shared approach to addressing students’ needs across the classes represented at the meeting.

- An ELA team used a noticings and wonderings protocol. The conversation focused on sixth through eighth grade mock ELA exam data. One teacher noticed that proficiency increased overall from sixth grade to eighth grade. Other noticings included Asian American students performing better than Black and Hispanic students, girls out performing boys, with the gap growing, and that 35% of sixth grade students picked the same incorrect answer for an item pertaining to text structure. The team then wondered about things such as whether student interest level affected the outcomes, why students are doing better on literacy analysis as opposed to non-fiction, and whether a specific aspect of the sixth grade curriculum is having a positive impact on students discerning the meaning of unfamiliar words.

- Although teachers claimed that they would like more opportunities to inform school-wide decisions, a group of teachers was responsible for formulating the teacher team weekly schedule. They have given input to improve testing procedures and processes, and teachers coordinate the town halls. The staff understands that questions, concerns, and suggestions can go directly to the assistant principals of their academy. Lastly, instructional team meetings are open to all. It is at these meetings that decisions regarding instructional scope and sequence, data analysis, and revisions to the school’s professional learning plan are made.