Quality Review Report

2017-2018

I.S. 237
Junior High-Intermediate-Middle 25Q237
46-21 Colden Street
Queens
NY 11355

Principal: Judith Friedman

Dates of Review:
March 13, 2018 - March 14, 2018

Lead Reviewer: Carlos Perez
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

I.S. 237 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>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>
</table>
### School Culture

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

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Area</th>
<th>Rating</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1.4</td>
<td>Maintain a culture of mutual trust and positive attitudes that supports the academic and personal growth of students and adults</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3.4</td>
<td>Establish a culture for learning that communicates high expectations to staff, students and families, and provide supports to achieve those expectations</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

### 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</td>
<td>Make strategic organizational decisions to support the school’s instructional goals and meet student learning needs, as evidenced by meaningful student work products</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3.1</td>
<td>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>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4.1</td>
<td>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>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4.2</td>
<td>Engage in structured professional collaborations on teams using an inquiry approach that promotes shared leadership and focuses on improved student learning</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5.1</td>
<td>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>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Area of Celebration

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

Findings

School leaders consistently and effectively communicate high expectations to staff and families with a particular focus connected to the Written and Verbal Evidence initiative. The system of communication employed allows for a successful partnership with families.

Impact

There is mutual accountability between staff members and a partnership with parents that supports progress towards all expectations.

Supporting Evidence

- High expectations for staff are established and communicated at the initial faculty conference in September. During the conference, expectations connected to the Written and Verbal Evidence (WAVE) initiative were communicated. According to the teachers it was made clear that it was an important focus for this school year. In addition, advance data is reviewed and school leaders target areas that need attention. Assessment practices were targeted to be addressed by all staff. New teachers are given additional support in meeting all instructional and curricular expectations thereby holding them accountable.

- There is a partnership between school staff and families to support and encourage students towards academic success and next level learning. This begins with fully attended workshops, parent participation on the School Leadership Team and an 85 percent parent active participation rate using the school’s online grade book system. Specific workshops for parents help ensure that students complete their education and are ready to enter high school with significant understanding of what is expected in the future. During the parent meeting they explained how teachers guide families and students with both academic and social-emotional support. School leaders and teachers understand and appreciate the parent role in the school community and parents feel empowered by the school to be active participants in their children’s academic process. Parents are fully aware of the expectations for their children to graduate, go to high school, attend college, or begin a career. Parents are kept fully informed through parent information boards, a school-wide newsletter, informative emails, and several high school transition workshops. In addition, parent participation and voice was key when teaming up with the New York City Greening program that resulted in the school being provided with solar panels.

- Staff understands the expectations as a result of Instructional walkthroughs, face-to-face communications, teacher team meetings, and the formal observation process. School leaders have a structured observation and feedback system aligned and connected to the Danielson Framework for Teaching. The observation cycles directly inform professional development and provide clear guidelines regarding pedagogical and curricular expectations. Feedback is discussed during post-observation conferences and teachers are given resources and next steps that help the teachers achieve those expectations. During the meeting with teachers, they explained they are fully aware of what is expected of them at all times and receive support as needed.
Findings

Across most but not the vast majority of classrooms teaching practices are aligned to the belief that children learn best through student discussions and relating content to real life situations.

Impact

Student work products and classroom discussions reflect high levels of rigor, thinking and participation across many but not all classrooms visited.

Supporting Evidence

- School leaders and teachers believe that students learn best when they engage in peer-to-peer discussions. During an eighth grade English Language Arts (ELA) lesson, students engaged in active partner and group discussions to understand Anne Franks’ experiences that led to the writing of her diary. During this lesson, students conducted active research and open, respectable discussions as they discussed in detail, Anne Franks’ reactions to her life in hiding. During an eighth-grade math lesson, students worked in groups and discussed with each other the process they used in completing their math problems and why they selected the process they used to reach a solution. One discussion included “I personally think that the quadratic function is super because you just input the numbers to find a, b, and c.” However, opportunities such as these for students to engage in high levels of discourse were not seen across the vast majority of classrooms.

- Rigor and high levels of thinking were evidenced in student work products throughout the school. For example, a students’ presentation on Jane Goodall evidenced planning, research and organization. The presentation provided information such as her being an animal rights activist and receiving her education at Cambridge University. It also identified key discovery facts regarding her daily systematic method to gain the trust of chimpanzees. A science research project completed by a group of students involved finding the effect of the number the number of rubber band twists on the rate of speed of their airplanes. This project was detailed and followed a format and protocol that identified the group’s hypothesis, background research, procedures, literature cited, scientific explanations, and reflection.

- Making lessons relevant to students through real-world connections is another core belief in how children learn best. During a seventh-grade social studies lesson, students engaged in a Socratic Seminar addressing whether or not the second amendment should be repealed. During this debate, students were extremely articulate, citing text-based evidence and following discussion protocols that allowed for respectful and organized discussion. Both sides made arguments that exhibited high levels of thinking and rigor. Students were heard stating, “You can’t fight back with violence and expect things to go well.” and “Times are a lot different now, back then you needed to arm yourself just to survive, not so much now.” During a sixth-grade social studies lesson, the teacher used the example of going shopping and needing to carry the packages up subway stairs as a way to help students identify the problems once faced by the ancient Greeks when they constructed buildings such as the Acropolis. However, opportunities like these for students to connect real-world situations to curricula were not seen across the vast majority of classrooms.
Additional Finding

**Quality Indicator:** 1.1 Curriculum  
**Rating:** Well Developed

**Findings**

All staff ensures that curricula is aligned to the Common Core Learning Standards and strategically integrate the instructional shifts, most notably writing across the curriculum. Curricular documents emphasize rigor and higher order skills for all students.

**Impact**

There is curricular coherence across all grades and subject areas that promote college and career readiness. All students including, English language Learners (ELLs) and students with disabilities have access to a curricula that results in their cognitive engagement.

**Supporting Evidence**

- All curricular documents exhibit rigorous habits that require students to construct responses and explain their thinking. For example, an eighth-grade ELA lesson plan required students to construct short responses in order to show students’ deep understanding of a symbol’s impact and varying meaning as it relates to a character. A sixth-grade social studies social studies lesson plan required students to identify and document the lasting contributions of each Golden Age civilization. In addition, the school uses the Teachers College Reading and Writing Project that has resulted in coherency and structure across ELA classrooms on all grades. Math teachers have developed instructional units aligned with the New York City Scope and Sequence, and have modified units to align with the Engage NY program modules.

- All planning documents evidence the requirement of the use of rigorous habits by students. Teachers plan for the use of visuals to assist ELLs and support their reading and writing curriculum through Achieve 3000. Furthermore, teachers use the computer-based program IXL to support the academic and instructional needs of students with disabilities. High achieving students in eighth grade take regents level courses in Earth Science, United States History, Algebra, and Living Environment. The Science curriculum includes hands-on experiments based on the scientific method that is embedded throughout all units. Revisions of unit plans indicate that individual student’s needs are being addressed. The use of rigorous content, critical thinking and problem solving activities ensures that students are being prepared for their next level.

- Strategic integration of instructional shifts is evidenced across all grades and subject areas. In Social Studies and science lesson plans there is a focus on text based evidence and writing from primary sources. The school-wide instructional focus is on the WAVE initiative along with college and career readiness skills and standards based elements of argument construction. It is designed for preparing students for rigorous written and verbal academic discourse expected in high school and college. Riding the WAVE has been added as a way to infuse the use of discussion and academic language. During the meeting with students, all students shared their knowledge of WAVE and how it helps them identify “written and or verbal evidence” in all their classes.
Findings
Teacher use and create rubrics, grading polices and common assessments that are aligned to the school’s curricula and to determine student progress towards goals. Teachers use specific rubric forms to provide feedback to students.

Impact
Feedback identifies strengths, areas of focus, and offers actionable next steps. Progress toward goals are tracked and results are used to adjust curricular and instruction.

Supporting Evidence

- Throughout classrooms visited and student work products reviewed, there was evidence of teacher feedback to students that identified student’s strengths, areas of focus, and offered students actionable next steps. For example, feedback on a student’s science project was written on the rubric and identified the students’ strength as having a clear claim statement and evidence to support that claim. Next steps for the student included using “a science concept that supports evidence, such as predator-prey and the up and down cycle that shows biotic and abiotic.” Feedback to a student’s math assignment identified the strength as identifying the correct expression for both parts of the math problem and how the student knows how to evaluate the expression. The teacher offered next steps that included recommendations for organizing the work in a way that makes it clear for the reader to follow.

- During teacher inquiry, teachers revise instructional units utilizing data based on student performance and teachers’ reflections. Actionable feedback to students is implemented through rubric forms from teachers and peer assessment. Common assessments and grading policies across all areas allow teachers and school leaders the ability to monitor student performance in order to make any adjustments to curricula and instruction. Teachers engage in team meetings weekly and often twice a week, in order to monitor progress using student data, work products and formative and summative assessments. Teachers then formulate and provide actionable feedback to students to support their progress and academic achievement.

- During the meeting with students, their work samples evidenced how teachers provide them with feedback. Students explained they receive feedback both verbally and written on rubrics. When questioned, students were capable of fully explaining the feedback. They voiced, “If you don’t meet the requirements for a three or four, the feedback tells you how to improve.” Students also shared that the verbal feedback they receive during conferences “helps a lot.” Students said that they always refer back to prior feedback and making sure they address items they missed previously when completing new assignments. Rubrics and feedback are connected. In many classes the feedback was written on the rubric in order for students to see what they need to do to receive a better score in the future.
Additional Finding

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

Findings

School leaders support teachers through frequent and strategic cycles of classroom observations and analysis of student work. Consistent instructional walkthroughs are done by pairs of administrators to norm the classroom observation process.

Impact

The attention to ensure that events are clearly described in the observation reports results in consistent effective feedback to teachers aligned to their goals that identifies their strengths and areas in need of improvement.

Supporting Evidence

- All feedback to teachers accurately captures classroom events, identifies strengths, offers timely and actionable next steps aligned to teachers' goals. For example, feedback to a teacher’s classroom observation commended the teacher for creating a culture for learning by establishing and creating clear routines for students to follow. Next steps recommended that a connection be made with the lesson’s target statement and the assessment practices, which is a goal for this teacher this year. A second observation report just as accurately captured events during the observation and noted the teacher’s strengths. In addition, this report offered the teacher next steps that were not only aligned do the teacher’s goal, but offered feedback aligned to the teachers' parent engagement goal. The next step included creating a “partnership between families and teachers by hosting quarterly gallery walks to inform parents of current and future instruction.”

- Teacher observations are strategic and conducted in a way that allows school leaders to support teachers with similar backgrounds. Each administrator handles a specific department and in addition, school leaders conduct instructional walkthroughs in pairs in order to norm their process and assure that feedback is aligned and teachers are offered consistent feedback regardless of who observes them. All teachers stressed they feel the observation process supports them. They shared how regardless of which administrator visits their classrooms, the “feedback looks the same.” Teachers believe that there is coherence in the observation practice, which helps in addressing expectations. Observation reports evidenced that school leaders routinely follow up on the recommendations they provide. Reports refer to prior suggestions often commending the teacher for implementing the previous recommendations or strongly reminding the teacher that it has not been implemented.

- Teachers believe there is value in the pre and post observation conversations, as it allows for open dialogue not only pertaining to the lesson, but also supports how teachers can improve as pedagogues. Teachers shared they are constantly reminded of their goals during conversations and in their reports. They explained that school leaders are “always letting us know of the progress towards our goals, and if we need to, we adjust them as we go along.”
## Additional Finding

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

### Findings

All teachers are engaged in professional inquiry based collaborations. Distributive leadership structures such as the position of lead teacher in charge of the home visitation program and lead teachers for departments are evident in the school organization.

### Impact

Teacher instructional capacity is strengthened resulting in schoolwide instructional coherence and increased student achievement. Teachers play an integral role in key decisions that affect student achievement.

### Supporting Evidence

- All teacher teams meet twice weekly in order to look at student work products, assessment results and pedagogical practices. Teachers make adjustments to all curricula utilizing data from assessments. They review student performance and work products to inform planning for future instruction and task development. Teachers agree that the work of the teams has positively affected their approach to instruction. As a result of teacher inquiry, teachers developed and implemented strategies such as WAVE which is embedded in teacher practices and all curricular documents throughout the school. Additionally, teachers stated that they have the opportunity to discuss both skills and strategies in order to improve lesson planning, share best practices, and identify plans for strategic and specific student groupings in class assignments across all grades and subject areas.

- Distributed leadership structures are embedded throughout the school. Teachers explained that their voice is heard everywhere in the school. Teachers feel comfortable in expressing their opinions and regularly assume leadership roles. Teacher's turnkey the learning they attain through off site professional development. There are teacher leaders across all departments who support their colleagues and act as liaisons with school leaders. In addition, there is one teacher who is part of the principal's extended cabinet. This role is key in relaying teacher concerns, and new initiatives as well as in making decisions. In addition, there is a lead teacher that heads the school's home visitation program. This teacher has the responsibility of supporting struggling students with additional support. Regular visits to students' homes are made by this teacher to assist students and their families ensuring the students' success.

- Teachers meet regularly with and without school leaders and reflect on implementing programs that will support and strengthen student outcomes. All staff worked together to ensure the inclusion of writing across content areas. This was a strategic decision by the staff as data showed that students needed support in their overall literacy skills. As a result, there is coherence in planning that includes a variety of writing activities requiring students to cite and provide text-based evidence. Teachers developed WAVE reference sheets that are used and embedded in lessons across departments. As a result of these specific practices being implemented most recent iReady data shows that 99 percent of eighth grade students are either at or approaching proficiency levels in literacy.