Quality Review Report

2017-2018

P.S. X015 Institute For Environmental Learning

K-8 10X015

2195 Andrews Avenue
Bronx
NY 10453

Principal: Tara Edmonds

Dates of Review:
January 3, 2018 and January 9, 2018

Lead Reviewer: Clarence Williams Jr.
The Quality Review Report

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

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

Information about the School

P.S. X015 Institute For Environmental Learning serves students in grade K 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>To what extent does the school...</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>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

<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>Area of Celebration</td>
<td>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</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>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1.3 Make strategic organizational decisions to support the school's instructional goals and meet student learning needs, as evidenced by meaningful student work products</td>
<td>Additional Finding</td>
<td>Proficient</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3.1 Establish a coherent vision of school improvement that is reflected in a short list of focused, data-based goals that are tracked for progress and are understood and supported by the entire school community</td>
<td>Additional Finding</td>
<td>Proficient</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4.1 Observe teachers using the Danielson Framework for Teaching along with the analysis of learning outcomes to elevate school-wide instructional practices and implement strategies that promote professional growth and reflection</td>
<td>Additional Finding</td>
<td>Proficient</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4.2 Engage in structured professional collaborations on teams using an inquiry approach that promotes shared leadership and focuses on improved student learning</td>
<td>Additional Finding</td>
<td>Proficient</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5.1 Evaluate the quality of school-level decisions, making adjustments as needed to increase the coherence of policies and practices across the school, with particular attention to the CCLS</td>
<td>Additional Finding</td>
<td>Proficient</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Area of Celebration

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

Findings

School structures such as safety procedures, venues for student voice and attendance protocols foster and support the school-wide student and staff commitment to shared beliefs around culture-building, discipline, and social-emotional supports.

Impact

The school’s approach to culture building, discipline, and social-emotional support is comprehensive, guided by student voice and interests, and results in a safe environment that is inclusive and respectful. Guidance and advisement structures are in place that have an impact on student academic and personal behaviors that puts them on a path to success.

Supporting Evidence

- School leaders have developed a theory of action to support student citizenship. Leaders theorize that student service enables students to take ownership of their learning while having a voice in the building. Teachers have initiated a program entitled “Service Squad.” Middle school students meet with kindergarten to third grade students during breakfast to walk them to class. They also monitor the cafeteria during breakfast to help promote safety. Students have stated that Service Squad gives them a voice because they talk to younger students about behavior while being a role model for their peers and playing a role in promoting safety. An additional example of student voice in the building is via student council. The student council helps to lead school improvement efforts by participating in a buddy-reading program. In this program, grade-eight students work with younger students to help them read to improve literacy. Student council members exercise their voice by having fundraisers and deciding what to do with the funds. An example was highlighted by students and staff; students raised funds and decided to support relief efforts in Africa.

  - The guidance counselor has created structures that provide for personalized supports for students. An intervention log is used for students who require individual attention. It includes the student admission date, all home contacts that have been made, and the interventions that have been incorporated. For example, a student, who was admitted in July, was having difficulty coming to school. Outreach was extended to the parent on several occasions. Interventions included a referral to a Family Advocacy Program (FAP) counselor and family therapy. Every parent interviewed agreed that the guidance counselor takes a personal interest in every individual student. An additional example is the protocol that every new student enrolled in the school must meet with the assistant principal with his or her family. The assistant principal reviews rules, academics and concerns that the family has. Parents have stated that this system has eased their child’s transition because a one-to-one, personalized relationship has been established.

  - To support the personalization of attendance monitoring, there is a monthly attendance team that includes an attendance coordinator, the principal, the assistant principal and the family worker. The team sends individualized attendance reports to parents and requires parents whose children have consistent attendance issues to meet with the attendance coordinator. The team has also created an attendance procedure booklet to monitor individual student attendance, which includes keeping a separate attendance roster besides the computer-generated one. In addition, every parent must complete a student absent sheet for absences that have extenuating circumstances such as medical or other extended absences. As a result of these supports, attendance is over ninety five percent.
Findings
Across classrooms, teaching practices are aligned to the curricula and reflect a belief system that students learn best through engagement. Across classrooms, student work products reflect high levels of student thinking and participation.

Impact
Although students are participating in discussions, and are engaged, and their work products reflect high levels of thinking, there is no evidence of student ownership of their learning.

Supporting Evidence

- Across classrooms visited, students were engaged in high levels of discussion. In a grade-two English Language Arts (ELA) class, students were participating in a discussion on opinion writing. The teacher asked the students to define the word opinion, one student stated, “I think an opinion is when you take a chance to guess.” The teacher asked if anyone disagreed. Another student stated, “An opinion is something that you think, but can’t prove.” The teacher modeled an example of an opinion stating what he felt the color of the classroom pet was. One student stated that it was a fact. Although classroom participation represented engagement, students were not challenged to explain their thinking or to elaborate on their thoughts. As a result, student ownership was not evident during the lesson.

- Teachers and school leaders have stated that students learn best when they are working in a student-led environment. In a grade-seven social studies class, students were observed working in stations on the development of colonial regions. At one station, students were working on “Table Twitter”; students had to write a short response about what they observed on a map and create a hashtag for it. One student stated, “I wrote about mixed farming because the map demonstrates that. So, I wrote #mixed farming.” At another station observed, students were looking at a map of geographical areas. A student stated, “Based on the map, there is a lot of forestry where the colonies settled.” Although students led discussions, at the stations, in this class this was not evident in the vast majority of classes. For example, a grade-six math class was observed. Students were working with ratios, rates and unit rates. Students were observed answering questions in short response without evidence of collaboration or student-led conversation. The teacher asked questions such as, “What would be the two units?” “What are the hours?” “Can you run five and a quarter laps per minute?” the lesson was designed for question and answer in a teacher-centered instructional environment.

- In a grade-eight ELA class that was observed, students were reading excerpts from a novel on the Vietnam War. The learning target was, “I can explain how details in the novel reveal the challenges Ha faces and her dynamic character.” Students were citing text-based evidence to support their claims and sharing their findings with their classmates. The teacher asked a student, “What’s going on in the first stanza?” a student stated, “South Vietnam is being honored; they’re saying their last goodbyes.” The teacher asked the student how they were honoring them. The student stated, “They are giving their last respects.” Although most students were participating in this classroom at high levels of thinking, this was not evident in the vast majority of classes.
Findings
School leaders and faculty incorporate Common Core Learning Standards and instructional shifts that include building knowledge about the world through text, in units and in lesson plans, and emphasize higher-order thinking skills across grades and subjects.

Impact
Purposeful planning decisions result in engaging and coherent curricula and tasks that promote college and career readiness.

Supporting Evidence

- A grade-eight ELA lesson plan demonstrates how students will use the text to build their knowledge about Vietnam by reading the poem, “The Last Respects.” The learning target is, “I can explain how details in the novel reveal the challenges Ha faces and her dynamic character.” The lesson plan also requires students to read an article entitled, “The Vietnam Wars” and tie the article to the poem by relating historical events to the plight of the main character. An additional example was evident in grade-four English Language Arts class. Students were required to read about the Iroquois nations. Supporting learning targets included, “I can describe text features of informational text that help me understand the text.” The teacher wrote in the lesson plan that the goal of the lesson will be for students to read and understand how the Haudenosaunee living in the past compared to how they live now.

- Across grades and subjects, Common Core Learning Standards are evident in the unit plans. A grade-eight algebra unit demonstrates how the teacher incorporates the Common Core Learning Standard, transcribing written statements using symbolic notations. Students are required to define the symbols they intend to use and discuss the differences between linear expressions and non-linear expressions. To further support the learning target, the lesson plan also requires students to review and assess the basic key words and phrases to represent the four operations.

- Lesson plans and units emphasize higher-order thinking skills by utilizing metacognitive practices to support students being aware of how they learn by having them make choices in their assignments. For example, in a grade-seven ELA lesson plan, the long-term target is, “I can express my own ideas clearly during discussions.” Students are required to select the questions that they want to answer. Questions are colored coded. For example, red questions require a minimum of writing a two-sentence answer. Blue requires a minimum of four sentences written. During an interview a student stated, “I like the choices I have because it challenges me to take the hardest task to push me.” An additional example of rigor is demonstrated in a grade four-curriculum overview. Using Depth of Knowledge level 4 to support extended thinking, students are asked to “create and measure angles as well as solve equations to find unknown angle measures.” Level three DOK tasks include, “construct, recognize, and define geometric objects before using their [the student] knowledge to classify figures and solve problems.”
Findings
Across classrooms, teachers and students use rubrics that are aligned with the school’s curricula. Across classrooms, teachers’ assessment practices consistently reflect the use of ongoing checks for understanding and student self-assessments.

Impact
Teachers use student work to provide actionable feedback to students. Additionally, teachers make adjustments to classroom instruction in order ensure all students’ needs are being met.

Supporting Evidence

- Across classrooms, checks for understanding result in adjustments to classroom instruction. In a grade-three ELA class, the teacher checked for understanding using equity sticks, a random way of selecting students by pulling names on sticks. The teacher selected students to share out which country had the hardest time accessing books. After using the sticks to select one student, the student stated, “The country I read about was New Guinea. They had to walk four hours while carrying books on their shoulders.” Another student selected Zimbabwe stating, “It is the most difficult because they had few paved roads.” The teacher did a check for understanding and asked the student what was a paved road. The student replied, “It’s when you don’t know where you’re going.” The teacher discontinued the share out and modeled what the word paved meant by illustrating a highway and a rocky trail. The teacher then went back to the student to ask if he still thought that Zimbabwe was the most difficult, now that they understand what paved meant. The student thought it was still difficult but perhaps, other countries had a harder time.

- Teachers use “Stars and Steps” to provide feedback to students. The stars represent what the student did well and the steps highlighted what the student needs to improve. A grade-six essay entitled “Who I Am” reflected stars and steps for the student. The star comments included, “You really did your journey well, especially explaining the father.” Steps included, “You need to incorporate more vocabulary and explain what you mean when talking about new topics.” An additional example on a student essay included the star comment, “Good story overall, I understood everything that you conveyed.” Steps included, “Try to use more significant words and action verbs to illustrate your points.”

- Students use a self-assessment entitled “Assessing My Assessment”. The document gives the student the score on a classroom assessment, and allows the students to explain how they think they performed on the test. In the example provided, a student received an “A” on a writing assessment. The student wrote that they were assessed on the skill of writing a claim and giving two details. The student thought that he did best on giving details. The student recorded that he needed more work explaining the details by paraphrasing. The document also had a check off with four levels from level one, “clueless”, to level four, “I know this so well, I can teach my friend.” The student checked off level two meaning, “I can do this with a little help.” Finally, the student stated what he could do to improve for the next lesson. The student stated the following, “I will work on giving a claim.”
Additional Finding

| Quality Indicator: | 3.4 High Expectations | Rating: | Proficient |

Findings

School leaders consistently convey high expectations to staff through a staff handbook, memoranda, and ongoing feedback and professional learning aligned to the Danielson Framework for Teaching. Outreach to parents through parent newsletters and guidance support a path to college.

Impact

Teachers and staff are held accountable for the high expectations conveyed through elements of the Danielson Framework for Teaching. The school provides ongoing information to families helping them to understand student progress toward college and career readiness.

Supporting Evidence

- The principal communicates with families through parents attending the School-Based Leadership Team (SBLT) meetings which support college and career readiness. An example from an October sixteen meeting agenda highlights college access for middle school students. The agenda states that the school is initiating middle school, college access for all for all grade-seven students. The agenda includes the organization of a “College Access Day” which includes each student adopting a college. Parents who participate in this committee share minutes with the Parent-Teacher Association. Also, one parent stated the following, “In grade-seven, my child is doing college prep and my grade-eight student is working with college access that provides college trips.” Another parent stated, “The school informs me of all college trips and opportunities for my child.” Teachers also use ClassDojo to communicate student progress to parents. This app allows parents to monitor their child’s progress in real time and allows for communication through text to the teacher.

- The principal uses informal observations to communicate high expectations to staff. An informal observation of a grade-seven ELA teacher demonstrated how high expectations are communicated. The principal stated that part of the professional learning cycle that is aligned to the Danielson Framework for Teaching is planning coherent instruction. This was supported by part of a seven-week cycle of professional development. Observation feedback under coherent instruction included, “You must include anchor charts in your plan for students to be able to refer back to for support.” Teachers have stated that their observations reflect the professional development that is provided in the beginning of the year. One teacher stated, “We are clear on the instructional expectations from leadership and the feedback we receive helps us grow professionally.”

- The principal communicates high expectations through the staff handbook. The handbook highlights behavioral expectations that teachers are required to incorporate into classrooms. The page entitled “The Professional Code of Ethics Non-Negotiables” states that teachers must be role models for students such as, “Be empathetic to the various situations our students are faced with both in and out of school.” The handbook also states that class trips must be curriculum-based and approved by administration. Teachers have stated that professional development regarding the staff handbook was conducted at the beginning of the year. During an interview, a teacher stated, “Our handbook is a living document and the principal follows up with different items from the handbook through professional development or a memo to staff to reiterate expectations.”
Findings

The majority of teachers are engaged in structured, inquiry-based professional collaborations that promote achievement of school goals. Distributed leadership structures are in place.

Impact

Teachers' collaborations strengthen their instructional capacity. Additionally, teacher voice drives school goals as well as the implementation of learning environment improvement efforts.

Supporting Evidence

- Teacher team meetings support school goals. A grade-five math team was observed. The team analyzed student work to support the goal of continuing to improve giving feedback to students. A teacher stated that the goal of the meeting was to work to understand how to give students better feedback. A teacher stated, “I need to pay more attention to the language I use in giving feedback.” During the meeting, teachers also looked at student work and discussed how to incorporate math vocabulary into the math lesson. A teacher provided an example of how to use vocabulary in the lesson by using pictures to determine definitions. Another teacher stated, “I give verbal feedback in real time as I walk around the classroom. Additional teacher team agendas document teachers working together to promote interdisciplinary practices between ELA and math.

- Distributive leadership practices are evident throughout the school. To support citizenship across the school, a teacher created a program call “Service Squad”. This program is used on a school-wide basis. The lead teacher that created the program organizes teachers to select students that will serve as lunch aides for the younger students during breakfast. The teacher also organizes a schedule with teachers to have students support literacy initiatives for grade-one students by having older students read to them. The organizer stated that the proposal was given to the principal and ultimately approved because it supported safety and literacy initiatives.

- Distributive leadership is evident in the school as teachers take on the role of teacher team leaders. Their role is to create the agendas and collaborate with teachers on the professional learning cycles that support teacher growth and the goals of the school. Team leaders also provide support to newer teachers by overseeing inter-visitations and walkthroughs. Teachers have stated that the role of the teacher leaders enables them to be stakeholders in the implementation of curriculum and teaching strategies that are used throughout the school.