Quality Review Report

2017-2018

P.S. 105 Sen Abraham Bernstein
Elementary 11X105
725 Brady Avenue
Bronx
NY 10462

Principal: Christophe Eustace

Dates of Review:
March 12, 2018 - March 13, 2018

Lead Reviewer: Jorge Estrella
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>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<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>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>
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</tbody>
</table>
### School Culture

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

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Area</th>
<th>Rating</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1.4 Maintain a culture of mutual trust and positive attitudes that supports the academic and personal growth of students and adults</td>
<td>Additional Finding</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>
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</tbody>
</table>

### Systems for Improvement

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

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

Quality Indicator: 5.1 Monitoring and Revising Systems  Rating: Well Developed

Findings
School leaders and staff have developed a transparent online system to gather student data and action plans relating to curricular and instructional practices. The school leader aligns the use of instructional resources with the goals for the school.

Impact
Effective structures enable faculty to evaluate processes to intentionally adjust curricular practices, organizational resources, and professional development to support student learning and student mastery of the Common Core. Access to the online system promotes transparency and accountability, resulting in an increase in the coherence of instructional and collaboration practices and policies across the school.

Supporting Evidence
- School leaders and teachers use an online template to provide feedback based on student performance on curriculum-based assessments: the instructional team uses exam reports broken down by the standards tested. The instructional team looks at standards addressed throughout a unit and works on improving lesson and unit question construction, analyzing characteristics of well-written items, formulating instructional goals and objectives for units, and addressing grade-specific and school-wide strengths and weaknesses to improve data-informed curricular adjustments. This online tool enables teachers to identify the level of their schoolwide use of established best practices for implementing the Common Core. It briefly describes how one might respond to various standards-based questions looking at awareness of Common Core, curriculum and unit planning, assessment, analysis and data, and instruction.

- The large size of the school building and staff requires the use of an online platform for sharing, collaboration, and ongoing monitoring of school activities. School leaders use this online platform regularly to monitor the work of teacher teams and all staff have access so they can share effective teaching strategies across grades to further promote a culture of mutual accountability. Surveys are used as a tool for real-time access to data on teacher perception of professional development, satisfaction with the learning activities or topics, as well as whether and how participants are likely to apply new knowledge and skills in their teaching practice. Teacher teams are required to upload weekly meeting notes that include the meeting agenda, the protocol that was used, the data that was reviewed, next steps, and a reflection that asks teachers to predict what impact their meeting will have in teaching practices. School leaders meet weekly with coaches and content leaders to assess the quality of teacher teamwork and plan appropriate next steps based on observational data, assessment of student work, and individual teacher needs.

- Based on historical results from standardized assessments and Advance data, school leaders made strategic organizational changes to provide staff with a focused and cohesive vision and promote coherent schoolwide pedagogical practices. For example, assistant principals moved from supervising specific grades to supervising a range of grades that overlaps with colleagues, thereby ensuring increased communication and focused pedagogical goals. Coaches target specific subject areas to work across content areas, emphasizing pedagogical best practices to be used schoolwide through mutual accountability of teaching expectations. Grade leaders serve as liaisons between grade-level teachers and school leaders, presenting grade concerns and leading efforts to identify and implement solutions to instructional and social emotional issues. Departmentalization in grades four and five promotes opportunities for teachers to focus on fewer content areas and students to have a better transition to middle school. These adjustments enable school leaders to communicate a unified set of beliefs regarding the school’s educational philosophy and teachers to seek support from a single source. As a result, communication is efficient and transparent and is yielding academic improvements.
**Area of Focus**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Quality Indicator:</th>
<th>3.1 Goals and Action Plans</th>
<th>Rating:</th>
<th>Proficient</th>
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**Findings**

There is a short list of clear, focused school-level goals and action plans in the Comprehensive Educational Plan (CEP) and other planning documents that are tracked for progress and adjusted accordingly which are developed with members of the entire school community.

**Impact**

While the school has developed collaborative teams to design the CEP goals, some of these goals have yet to leverage thoughtful changes to clearly accelerate academic achievement and social-emotional growth or purposefully improve teacher practice.

**Supporting Evidence**

- School leaders and teachers have a clear vision for school improvement that focuses on schoolwide goals that are effectively tracked. Goals for Common Core alignment, increased student achievement in English Language Arts (ELA) and math, differentiated instruction, and increased parental involvement are clearly outlined in the CEP and communicated to the school community. Action plans and the work of teacher teams are aligned to these goals and are monitored for effectiveness. For example, school leaders and teachers have worked to ensure that instruction is focused on enhancing student engagement through student-centered lessons using strategic integration of instructional shifts, where all students are expected to provide evidence when responding in all content areas. This is modeled by teachers and practiced by students in small groups via reciprocal-format, peer-to-peer conversations, in order to ultimately be able to work independently. The CEP goals reflect planning by the instructional team; the needs assessment and action plan reflect the needs of specific sub-groups such as English Language Learners (ELLs) and students with disabilities and lead to accelerated learning. For example, comparing the November 2017 with the January 2018 Fountas and Pinnell assessments 35 percent of ELLs and 52 percent of students with disabilities moved one reading level.

- The CEP planning process is conducted via cabinet meetings, grade leader meetings, and the School Leadership Team (SLT) which, at the end of the school year, engages in reviewing student performance, trends and successes, and how they relate to program decisions for the following year. Further work over the summer refines the CEP goals and action plans based on state assessment results, a school survey, Measures of Teacher Practice, and qualitative feedback via teachers and parent surveys received during the school year. The SLT also engages in discussions and analysis of student achievement data and develops and tracks these schoolwide goals. Although the school has designed the five required goals for the CEP, some of them do not have clear metrics to measure whether or not the school will accomplish the CEP goal by the end of the school year. As a result, outcomes may not reflect leverage changes that directly connect to accelerated student learning outcomes and social-emotional growth.

- School leaders maintain on-going and frequent communication with families and the broader school community. As evident in SLT agendas and minutes, every month the principal provides updates to the community about what is happening, while listening to stakeholders about their ideas and concerns. An open-door policy is maintained by the school's leadership, and several parents spoke about the principal's and assistant principal's openness to ideas and feedback. One such idea that emerged in the SLT was to invite the parents to walk through the school and visit classrooms to highlight what the school does throughout the day. Parents receive updates from the school on progress reports, report cards, during parent-teacher conferences, and via the online grading platform. In this way, goals are tracked to accelerate student learning and progress, as the next level of goals are made available to the student and parents. Although parents and teachers reported their participation in the design of the CEP goals, some of the parents were not able to articulate the CEP goals for this school year.
# Additional Finding

<table>
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<tr>
<th>Quality Indicator:</th>
<th>1.1 Curriculum</th>
<th>Rating:</th>
<th>Well-Developed</th>
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## Findings

Rigorous habits and higher order skills are emphasized in curricula and academic tasks and are embedded in a coherent way across grades and subjects. Additionally, school leaders and teachers emphasize rigorous habits and higher-order skills across grades and subjects.

## Impact

The school’s strategic curricular decisions result in teacher-made curricula that are coherent across grades and subject areas, promoting college and career readiness for all students across grades and subjects. Multiple access points, rigorous habits, and higher-order skills in academic tasks are incorporated in all lessons so that all learners, including English Language Learners (ELLs) and students with disabilities must demonstrate their thinking.

## Supporting Evidence

- School leaders and teachers use Common Core Learning Standards (CCLS) aligned curricula across grades and subjects. Teachers design reading and writing curricula, including curricular maps, units of study, and lesson plans. The math curriculum is also CCLS-aligned. Revisions are reflected in units of study and lesson plans. The school uses the NY scope and sequence curricula for science and social studies which has units incorporated in reading, writing, and math curricula. Teacher teams work collaboratively to refine units of study, using teacher reflections/comments on shared documents. To promote coherence, teachers use a gradual release model to decrease teacher talk and increase student participation. Acquisition, meaning-making and transfer (AMT) are used to provide structure to the lesson. This coherent approach to curriculum design helps teachers prepare all students for college and career opportunities. Unit and lesson plans included tasks that develop students’ ability to apply different strategies to solve real-world problems, synthesize information within and across texts, analyze and draw conclusions from data and cite evidence. As a result, 95 percent of the school's former fifth graders passed their sixth-grade classes in math, English, social studies, and science as reported in the 2016–17 School Quality Snapshot/Elementary School.

- The curriculum integrates the instructional shifts as evidenced by activities in which students engage in close reading of text and using textual evidence to support claims. Fluency and reasoning skills and effective communication are reinforced through student-to-student discussion, open-ended problem solving, and writing. Planning incorporates AMT, so students receive information during the lesson, deepen their understanding and apply the learning.

- Curricula and tasks are designed to engage a variety of learners. All classrooms use extensions to support high-level learners. In a grade-five math lesson plan about mixed number division, students will work together dividing fractions using visuals or the keep, change, flip strategy. Students will be provided with manipulatives, anchor charts, glossaries, and calculators. Higher-performing students will engage in reciprocal math on more complex problems with a worksheet for students who finish early. Supports for ELLs and students with disabilities will be provided via translated text, additional model exercises, and one-one-one support from the teacher and peers, with tutoring for those students who may need additional support.

- The rigor of the curricula engage students in challenging tasks embedded in units of study, which require students to demonstrate their thinking utilizing higher-order thinking skills. For example, a human rights unit develops students’ ability to read and understand complex text as they consider how both real people and fictional characters respond to challenges. In this unit, students build knowledge on basic human rights through excerpts of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, paired with short firsthand accounts of people around the world who have, do, or will face human rights challenges. As a result, all students will engage in higher-orders tasks while connecting to real-world related to current events.
**Additional Finding**

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

Most instructional practices and academic tasks reflect a set of beliefs that are grounded in enhancing student engagement through student-centered lessons that incorporate rich, high-level discussions. However, some instructional strategies are yet to reflect optimal use of high quality instructional supports or extensions that enrich discussion.

**Impact**

Even though instructional practices are informed by the Danielson Framework for Teaching and the instructional shifts that engage all learners in appropriately challenging tasks that offer opportunities for higher-order thinking, is yet to be evident in a number of classes.

**Supporting Evidence**

- School leaders and teachers reported that students learn best when the instructional focus is on enhancing student engagement through student-centered lessons that incorporate rich, high-level discussions. Teachers emphasize this in teacher team meetings by tailoring the curriculum to this focus. Across classrooms these beliefs were evident. In a fourth-grade reading class, a student stated, “I like working with my classmates because I learn from them and when I know something well, I am able to help them.” In this class students were leading discussions to identify the theme of the text “Swimming with Sharks.” During this activity all students were engaged in activities promoting independence and high-level thinking as the teacher used the gradual release model. In a fourth-grade science class students discussed how living things get energy, using a group activity which gave each student a role in the group. However, the student-led group work observed is not yet fully implemented in a number of classrooms. Most classrooms reflected several tiered activities and individualized learning, supporting the school’s belief and integration of the instructional shifts. Across classrooms, teachers were observed pushing students to use mathematical concepts, strategies, and skills, explain the rationale of solving math problems to the class, and lead discussions. These practices, supported by the Danielson Framework for Teaching, helped ensure common teaching philosophies and school wide beliefs.

- In a fifth-grade ELA lesson, the teacher modeled how to look for character feelings, then annotate in the modeled text “Midnight Fox.” The teacher then said, if I mark several character feelings, then I can infer a trait. The teacher then asked not only for students to determine character feelings, but to report what they had learned about Seema, and what character traits describe her. Students had to support their responses with details from the text. Later in the lesson, students had an opportunity to transfer learning using the book they were reading in the 100 Book Challenge. ELLs were provided with native language supports, anchor charts, and visuals as well as language acquisition strategies such as total physical response and cognates.

- Teachers used supports, such as chart paper, strategy cards, manipulatives, and assistive technology to engage and support students in their learning. In most classrooms, teachers encouraged students to explain their thinking. For example, in a fifth-grade math classroom, the teacher adjusted the level of support to meet the needs of ELLs. Students in differentiated groups were required to find the solution to their problems at differentiated levels and were provided with language supports including translations, color coded notes, and pictures. Other groups were using assistive technology to work with an online math program. All students were engaged in the activity and had opportunities to share their thinking. The teacher facilitated the process and provided support to students when needed. Although, in general, teachers push students’ thinking including having students make deductions and discern implications and applications of information from sources, this was not apparent in a few classes.
## Additional Finding

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<th>Quality Indicator:</th>
<th>2.2 Assessment</th>
<th>Rating:</th>
<th>Proficient</th>
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### Findings

Teachers use or create assessments, rubrics, and grading policies that are aligned with the school’s curricula. Teachers’ assessment practices reflect the varied use of ongoing checks for understanding and student self-assessment tools such as rubrics, checklists, and reflection sheets.

### Impact

Assessment practices provide actionable feedback to students and teachers to support improvement in student achievement. Most teachers use several checks for understanding allowing them to make effective adjustments to meet all students’ learning needs.

### Supporting Evidence

- Students coherently articulated how they use assessments and rubrics with reference to written assignments and clarity around their mastery of tasks. Reviewed documents revealed that students receive detailed rubrics from teachers with comments including written feedback with next steps. Students then confer with teachers on the feedback and how it can be used to improve their writing. Students implement the next steps offered in the feedback and again turn in their assignments. One example of feedback reads, “You clearly stated a topic sentence and discussed different topics about Nigeria. Your illustrations were neat and helped the reader understand the topic. Next time, try to challenge yourself to reach a three and clearly state details about each of the subtopics you stated. Try to paraphrase from the text and explain your own opinion.”

- When students were asked if they understood what they could do to achieve a higher score on any of their assignments, most were able to explain or provide work samples that had been graded with any form of feedback on it. While all students were able to share their ELA and math work samples and articulate how to use the feedback and assessment tools to improve their achievement, some students were unable to provide science and social studies work samples.

- Across classrooms, teachers use a variety of formative assessments to monitor student progress across content areas. Teachers’ assessment practices reflect the use of ongoing checks for understanding through questioning, one-on-one or group conferences, observational notes, and wireless devices to pool student responses. In a fifth-grade math class, while students worked in teams solving word problems, the teacher circulated about the room checking on students’ progress, and annotating students’ responses in her formative assessment tool. After her first round she asked students to pause their work and referred them to an anchor chart so they could move on with their task. In a third-grade ELA class, students were reading excerpts from *Honeysuckle House*, annotating, and having discussions defending their answers based on textual evidence. Teachers then distributed a wireless device to each student and started polling answers for each question. This allowed teachers and students to know the correct answers and to engage in group discussions to support their answers. This level of using checks for understanding is yet to be fully implemented across classrooms.

- In lessons, students use checklists, rubrics, and reflection sheets for self-assessment. This was observed in student work that was posted on bulletin boards. When asked, students said that they engage in self-assessment and regularly engage in peer assessments. In a math task about creating real-world mixed numbers a student self-assessment read “I did everything asked and did everything step by step” followed by a reflection “I need to improve by using similar units for my word problem. I can do this by practicing writing problems and letting my friend check it.” Thus, students are able to use different assessment tools to gauge their progress towards their learning goals.
Additional Finding

### Quality Indicator: 4.2 Teacher Teams and Leadership Development

| Rating: | Well Developed |

#### Findings

The vast majority of teachers are engaged in structured, inquiry-based professional teams and professional learning communities (PLCs) that have strengthened teacher instructional capacity and promoted the implementation of Common Core Learning Standards. Distributed leadership structures are embedded so that there is effective teacher leadership.

#### Impact

The work of teacher teams and PLCs has resulted in a schoolwide shift toward student-centered instruction and coherence leading to higher academic achievement. Teachers are empowered to play an integral role in impacting student learning.

#### Supporting Evidence

- School leaders ensure that teachers engage in ongoing professional collaborations in the implementation of the Common Core and instructional shifts. All teachers meet multiple times weekly in inquiry-based grade team meetings. PLCs are structured in five-week cycles for teachers to focus on improving school-wide instructional goals coherently across grades and content areas. Teams focus on reviewing student work samples using the Tuning Protocol and Measures of Student Learning during common planning time. All teacher team meetings are built into the master schedule or after school. During the meeting with teachers, when asked about the impact of teacher teamwork, they all agreed that sharing best practices and supporting each other has been essential for their professional growth. One teacher stated that she learned how to take better notes on students as she goes through the lesson. Another teacher added that she learned how to empower her students to solve problems on their own in all subjects. Teachers collectively reported that PLCs and teacher team meetings help them provide what students need the most across all grades and content areas, and these strategies elevate their mastery of teaching.

- During a special education PLC meeting, teachers evaluated individual student work for trends, wonderings, and findings and to determine if students could properly utilize Restate the question, Answer the question, Details from the text, Detail from the text and Inference (RADDI) strategies across content areas. They planned lessons with supports such as sentence starters, graphic organizers to support students explaining their claims, checklists to help students self-assess and monitor how they are learning. Teachers use these findings and practices to improve their pedagogy towards the gradual release model promoting student engagement through student-centered lessons that incorporate rich, high-level discussions. Through their work in PLCs teachers share instructional strategies and collaborate to develop techniques to increase their support to all students. These ongoing professional collaborations support the improvement of instructional practice resulting in a five percentage point increase comparing the 2016 with the 2017 New York State ELA assessments moving from 33 percent to 38 percent which represents 6 percent higher than its comparison groups and 6 percent higher than the district’s schools.

- School leaders promote distributed leadership practices at the school through the multiple team structures. There are ample opportunities for developing teacher leadership in the school, such as instructional coaches, mentors, coordinators for the Instructional Focus Collaboration districtwide activity, and character education teachers, among other leadership opportunities. In these capacities, teacher teams make decisions about implications for instruction and communicate their findings and noticings with colleagues across grades and subjects. Teachers, for example, facilitate professional development via schoolwide and grade level sessions as well as offering their classrooms for inter-visitations, sharing strategies, planning tasks for engaging students in group discussions to solve real world problems in math, and proposing instructional materials such as online educational software to support the needs of all students. The result of these opportunities for teacher leadership affects student learning across the entire school.