Quality Review Report

2017-2018

P.S. 108 Philip J. Abinanti
Elementary 11X108
1166 Neill Avenue
Bronx
NY 10461

Principal: Charles Sperrazza

Dates of Review:
April 18, 2018 - April 19, 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>To what extent does the school...</td>
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<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>
</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>Additional Finding</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>Well Developed</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>Additional Finding</td>
<td>Well Developed</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 Celebration</td>
<td>Well Developed</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>Area of Focus</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>Well Developed</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>
Findings
The school's theory of action includes a rationale for the short list of school-level goals and action plans apparent in the Comprehensive Education Plan (CEP) and other planning documents, focusing on improving achievement for African American and Hispanic boys. School leaders effectively involve and communicate with the school community, including teachers and families.

Impact
Goal setting and decision-making, based on school data, is well informed by regular communication with and input from all stakeholders that help determine next steps for ongoing school improvement. This has resulted in leveraging changes that have led to enhancements in teaching and learning.

Supporting Evidence
- Stakeholders developed a “theory of action” based on the belief of providing students with the social, emotional, and academic supports that positively impact student achievement. All stakeholders collaborate in formulating the CEP goals, targeting both instructional and social-emotional needs of the school. As documented in the CEP, the needs assessment was based on the instructional team's data analysis and self-reflection on the strengths of and areas to improve student performance on New York State assessments, school internal assessments, and New York City Department of Education metrics. Students are assessed in school three times a year to achieve a complete picture of all students’ learning needs, with an emphasis on African-American and Hispanic boys, students with disabilities, and English Language Learners (ELLs). The goals are for these targeted groups to demonstrate progress toward achieving rigorous tasks and for increased teacher performance and community involvement. The CEP goals reflect the school’s belief in the use of consistent, research-based, schoolwide instructional practices to engage students in learning activities that foster academic achievement and college readiness.

- The school’s CEP contains a comprehensive tracking system which includes teacher and student data. Tracking is done in a variety of ways, including a review of observation data, lesson artifacts, and student progress reports, leading to adjustments directly linked to the acceleration of student learning. For teachers, adjustments include increased participation in one-to-one conferences with school leaders, increased support from mentors or peers, and targeted intervisitation to strengthen pedagogy. For students, adjustments include academic intervention services which ensure additional support for students, such as accessible technology during lunch time, before school, and after school, so students can work on their math and reading online programs. In addition, the school offers Saturday academic intervention programs. As result, on midpoint assessments, a targeted subgroup of African-American and Hispanic boys had a 61 percent increase in meeting the goal by moving up three or more reading levels, with an additional 39 percent near or approaching the goal by moving up two or more reading levels. In mathematics, within the same subgroup, 100 percent of students improved and sustained an average growth of 21 percent compared to the baseline assessment.

- Parents reported that they regularly collaborate with school leaders in school-level goal setting through monthly School Leadership Team (SLT) and Parent Association meetings. During the parent meeting, they mentioned participating in the design and revision of school goals during the SLT meetings. Teachers were familiar with the CEP goals and indicated that at the beginning of the year, during teacher team meetings, they look at school data and formulate goals and action plans that later are revised by the SLT. Teachers reported that there is shared decision-making related to school goals that provides additional support for targeted sub-groups. School documents, including teacher team and professional development agendas, and SLT minutes, provide evidence of engagement of all stakeholders in schoolwide decision-making.
### Findings

School leaders support the development of all teachers, including those new to the profession, through cycles of formal and informal observations, targeted professional development, and assistance from coaches and consultants. Observations by school leaders provide feedback that is actionable and articulates expectations with clear next steps.

### Impact

Although school leaders offer effective feedback that results in positive growth for all teachers, adjustments are being made for leaders to ensure that observations are more strategically targeted.

### Supporting Evidence

- School leaders develop a schedule for four cycles of observations informed by the Danielson Framework for Teaching and provide feedback to teachers from these. This feedback from includes commendations and recommendations aligned to the instructional focus. In addition, school leaders engage in learning walks targeting specific instructional practices and give teachers specific formative feedback from these. While all teachers receive feedback from these cycles of observations, new teachers receive additional feedback on their performance from mentors, coaches, and consultants as well as one-on-one sessions with the principal targeting areas of need based on analysis of student work and data. For example, based on student data, ELLs were struggling with skills and strategies such as summarizing/synthesizing, inferring, using context clues, making text-to-world connections, and identifying themes. The principal then determined that some teachers needed additional support in putting more emphasis on reading and vocabulary development strategies and provided them with consultants and coaches. Although there is a schedule for frequent cycles of observation, school leaders are diligently making adjustments to successfully meet their learning targets for this school year. Thus, while most teachers are constantly provided with feedback that supports strengthening their pedagogy, more strategic cycles would better support teacher growth.

- School leaders shared a professional development plan that outlines topics for weekly sessions for the school year. These planned professional development (PD) sessions were adjusted based on Advance data regarding teacher performance and preference. For example, some of the PD topics throughout the school year included using data to inform differentiation of instruction, looking at student work, implementing a growth mindset in the mathematics classroom, planning and preparing for daily lessons, an introduction to autism, and best practices for maintaining high expectations and intellectual engagement for ELLs. In addition, based on individual or group needs, teachers engage in intervisitation. Teachers reported that these PD sessions have been essential in improving the quality of instruction and helping them meet their professional goals.

- A review of observation reports reveals that teachers receive detailed written feedback that captures their strengths, assesses the quality of teacher and student work, and provides actionable next steps relative to student engagement, questioning and discussion techniques, and assessment during lessons. For example, in one observation report, the school leader commented, “When delivering a mini-lesson, reference and annotate the model that was displayed on the whiteboard. This will provide a visual connection to the concept being taught.” Other written feedback stated, “As some students were called multiple times, use popsicles sticks or another means of randomly calling on students to support engagement.” This observed pattern of teachers implementing feedback was seen in most observations, making it clear that feedback is implemented and effective in improving pedagogy and student performance.
Additional Finding

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Quality Indicator:</th>
<th>1.1 Curriculum</th>
<th>Rating:</th>
<th>Well Developed</th>
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**Findings**

School leaders and teachers thoughtfully align curricula to the Common Core Learning Standards and strategically integrate the instructional shifts that build schoolwide coherence and engage students in rigorously demanding academic tasks.

**Impact**

All students take part in the school’s rigorous and coherent curricula across grades and subjects. All learners participate in challenging tasks that promote higher level thinking and engage students in authentic learning experiences, preparing them for the challenges of colleges and careers.

**Supporting Evidence**

- School leaders and teachers reported that all curricula across grades and content areas are Common Core-aligned. The current reading and writing curricula are teacher-created, a result of teachers’ team collaboration, support of consultants, and input from school leaders. Social studies content is incorporated within units of studies, *GO Math!* is used, complemented by Common Core, and the school follows the New York City Scope and Sequence in science. To promote coherence across content areas and subjects for vocabulary development, teachers incorporate Beck’s research-based model, *The Six Steps to Smart Words*. Moreover, Understanding by Design (UbD) is used in the planning process to guide curriculum, instruction, and assessment. This coherent curricular approach helps teachers prepare all students for college and career opportunities. As a result, 94 percent of the school’s former fifth graders passed their sixth-grade core classes, as reported in the 2016–17 School Quality snapshot/Elementary School.

- Across all content areas and grades, instructional planning documents purposely integrate the instructional shifts into the curriculum, as evident by activities such as using textual evidence to support claims, reading texts closely, engaging in multi-step problem solving, and using different approaches to solve problems. Embedded activities across disciplines help students to acquire academic vocabulary, strengthen fluency, and build communication and reasoning skills. A first-grade geometry lesson plan introduced key vocabulary words, such as perimeter, centimeter, foot, inch, and length using visuals. Students are asked to respond to what they know about each word and provide examples and non-examples of the word. Also, a second-grade “Types of Communities” unit requires students to understand the differences in housing and population in each community. Students are required to identify and use examples from text to show characteristics of urban, suburban, and rural communities. Thus, all students are exposed to rich and rigorous curricula focused on the Common Core and college and career readiness skills.

- A review of instructional planning documents revealed that teachers incorporate academic tasks in units that emphasize rigorous habits and higher order skills across grades and subjects for all students, including ELLs and students with disabilities. Units include questions and tasks aligned to Webb’s *Depth of Knowledge* (DOK). For example, the target of an electricity and magnetism grade four unit is for students to explain the purpose and function of a switch and engage in tasks designing a circuit, including a control to open and close the circuit, when needed. Furthermore, lesson plans incorporate differentiated activities for ELLs and students with disabilities by including scaffolds, visuals, translated materials, key vocabulary, manipulatives, and strategic grouping. This includes support for students newly arrived in the country, with additional guides such as Total Physical Response (TPR) and one-on-one paraprofessional support as well as activities engaging students in critical thinking. In a fourth-grade reading lesson, students are asked to identify the author’s purpose of a text, and in a science lesson, students are engaged in critical thinking tasks to identify substances soluble in water. As a result, all students are steeped in cognitively challenging academic tasks that promote learning and extend student thinking.
Findings
Across classrooms, teaching practices provide all learners with multiple entry points into curricula. Most discussions are in small groups, with students leading conversations and supporting their peers.

Impact
Although teachers are providing multiple entry points with challenging tasks to engage all students in higher levels of thinking and participation, in the vast majority of classrooms, this practice has yet to result in ownership for all students.

Supporting Evidence
- Across visited classrooms, teachers created positive learning environments, displaying print-rich materials including anchor charts, word walls, progress charts, groupings assignments, accountable talk stems, manipulatives, and rubrics. Moreover, accessible technology is available to support the learning process. These resources allow students to independently use the room as a resource. Teachers and students were observed using them to allow all learners a variety of pathways to complete tasks and demonstrate their thinking. Questions and tasks are formulated to meet the needs of specific student groups, based on their abilities. In a third-grade reading class, ELLs were provided with translated text, sentence starters, visuals, and time allotted for buddy reading. These strategies allowed all students to engage in discussions with their peers around identifying elements of the pourquoi tale. Other groups were writing a response describing how a character was feeling, using evidence from the text to support their details about the character. As a result of these supports, students consistently engage in challenging tasks and demonstrate high levels of thinking.

- The Beck’s research-based model, *The Six Steps to Smart Words* for vocabulary development, is used across classrooms. In a first-grade writing lesson on planning beginning and middle events of their narrative, the teacher posed questions to effectively engage students in collaborative discussions to plan their drafts via one-on-one, group, and teacher-directed activities. The teacher provided graphic organizers, traffic light transition words, vocabulary development, and differentiated instruction that was visible by tiered groupings with differentiated tasks. As the teacher circulated about the room, she pushed students' thinking with questions like, “What happened before that?” or “How did that happen?” All students were engaged in the writing task and made their thinking visible in their interactions and written work. However, not all teachers currently present quality supports to fully engage higher achievers. In some classes, some higher achievers remained idle after finishing their tasks.

- Across classrooms, teachers implemented structures and routines, including collaborative protocols for students to have conversations and small group discussions based on questions posed by the teacher. In most classes, groups were assigned a group captain who facilitated team conversations. In addition, based on data, groups also have experts in the content who support their peers by clarifying concepts, skills, and/or strategies. Other group roles include reader, identifier, planner, and checker. Students were able to articulate their roles and were observed in action facilitating the learning process. For example, in a fourth-grade reading class, students were asked to work in groups to identify the author’s purpose and its meaning, then write it in their graphic organizer. During the process, students discussed their ideas using accountable talks stems, each taking their individual roles within their groups. However, these pedagogical strategies are yet to be fully implemented in the vast majority of classrooms. In some lessons, teachers are still working on implementing a gradual release approach to promote independence and ownership among students.
Additional Finding

Quality Indicator: 2.2 Assessment | Rating: Proficient

Findings

Across classrooms, teachers use assessments, rubrics, and grading policies that are aligned with curricula. In addition, teachers’ assessment practices consistently reflect the use of varied checks for understanding and student self-assessment.

Impact

Teachers’ assessment practices provide actionable feedback to students and teachers regarding student progress. While most teachers’ ongoing checks for understanding result in effective on-the-spot instructional adjustments during lessons, some missed opportunities to give actionable feedback or adjust instruction were noticed.

Supporting Evidence

- Across classrooms, teachers develop Common Core-aligned rubrics to provide students with feedback on how to improve their work. Teachers and school leaders agreed to establish a schoolwide grading policy to further align to the school’s curricula across grades and subjects. Teachers provide feedback to students regarding next learning steps using the “glows” and “grows” format, and in most classes, students use task-specific rubrics for writing. One comment to a student was, “You used an engaging opening which stated an opinion. Next time, try to use more content vocabulary from the unit to support your thinking.” As a result, coherence in messaging achievement and progress is evidenced by the students’ ability to articulate their proficiency levels, learning goals, and progress. During the meeting with students, they agreed that teachers’ feedback “is consistent, in a written and verbal form,” which helps them to better understand the content and improve their grades. However, some student work reviewed presented only grades in percentage form or had statements like “great job,” missing opportunities to provide actionable and meaningful feedback.

- The review of student work products revealed that across content areas, students use discipline-specific rubrics, including performance descriptors for four levels of proficiency. In a fifth-grade math budget project rubric, a score of four indicated that by the end of the task, students will have demonstrated evidence of understanding concepts of budget and ensure that they make purchases within or under the budget. Students shared that rubrics are provided before the task, and the teacher goes over the rubric so that all students have clear understanding of what is expected.

- Several techniques of ongoing checks for understanding were observed across classrooms. In most classrooms, teachers constantly circulated around the classroom checking in on students, paying particular attention to students who displayed challenges at the start of their assigned tasks. Most teachers have a formative assessment tool to record students’ responses and progress, and, in some cases, further clarify what is expected. Teachers assess students via questioning, one-on-one conferencing, and/or listening to and questioning small group discussions to gauge collaborative work. For example, in a grade two/three classroom, the teacher conferenced with the students. In a fourth grade Integrated Co-Teaching (ICT) classroom, the teacher noticed that one of the students had difficulty finding the perimeter of a rectangle. The teacher then reassigned the student to another group, where students’ expertise supported the student’s understanding. However, this approach of making on-the-spot adjustments to lessons is yet to be implemented in the vast majority of classrooms.

- Most of the students interviewed stated that they assess their own learning, as teachers ask them to talk about their work “all the time” and set goals with them. Students were observed in classrooms using green, yellow, and red color-coded cards to self-assess their progress towards accomplishing their tasks. Other students were using rubrics, checklists, and exit slips.
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 engage in inquiry-based, structured professional collaborations that strengthen teacher instructional practices and promote the implementation of Common Core Learning Standards. Distributed leadership structures are embedded within professional development and team planning.

Impact

Inquiry-based, professional collaborations have strengthened the instructional capacity of teachers, resulting in schoolwide instructional coherence and increased achievement for all learners. Effective structures for teacher leadership allow teachers to play an integral role in key decisions that affect student learning across the school.

Supporting Evidence

- School leaders ensure that all teachers engage in ongoing professional collaborations in implementing the Common Core and the instructional shifts. Teachers, in daily common planning periods, in grade and subject level teams, and in specialty teams, work collaboratively in developing instructional strategies. These include engaging students in academic discussions, using differentiated instruction, and implementing reading comprehension strategies that help engage all learners at their levels, with appropriate scaffolds and supports, as needed. A review of planning documents revealed that teachers also determine strategies for multi-step problem solving or strategies to address the needs of ELLs and students with disabilities. As a result, the curricula across grades and content areas are showing instructional coherence, which is promoting academic achievement for all learners. For instance, the results of the 2017 New York State standardized assessments showed 51 percent of the students meeting State standards on the State math test; outperforming the City at 42 percent and the district at 31 percent.

- An observed teacher team analyzed samples of student writing at three levels of proficiency using a task specific rubric, comparing pre- and post-assessments and the features that differentiated the performance levels. In their protocol, teachers used the “Closing the Gap: Data Review” document, where they recorded students’ strengths, challenges, teaching implications, and strategies. Each participant shared their noticings. For example, one teacher noted that some students wrote simple sentences, while other, higher performing students wrote complex sentences. In terms of challenges, teachers agreed that most students still needed more work on using descriptive words. Teachers also shared instructional strategies, such as modeling, differentiated small group instruction, and using checklists and graphic organizers. Teachers reported that meeting with their colleagues daily has contributed to improving their practice through the sharing of pedagogical strategies, tools, and techniques, leading to better instruction and improved achievement for all learners. On the 2017 New York State standardized assessments, 49 percent of the students met State standards on the State English test; outperforming the comparison group at 48 percent, the district at 31 percent, and the City at 40 percent.

- In support of a distributive leadership model, the school has grade leaders and math and special education liaisons. They lead curriculum design and facilitate PD, as well as guiding and supporting teaching initiatives. Also, teachers developed a student profile tool that allows teachers to have all students’ performance data in one document. This facilitated schoolwide data analysis. Teachers are also empowered to make curricular adjustments and to recommend supplemental instructional materials as well as online resources for students and parents, including software for reading, math, and academic interventions. For example, the English as a Native Language (ENL) teacher requested Rosetta Stone for parents and students. Teachers’ active participation in schoolwide initiatives improves student learning across the school.