Quality Review Report

2017-2018

M.S. 180 Dr. Daniel Hale Williams
Junior High-Intermediate-Middle 11X180
700 Baychester Avenue
Bronx
NY 10475

Principal: Marlon Williams

Dates of Review:
March 22, 2018 - March 23, 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

M.S. 180 Dr. Daniel Hale Williams 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><em>To what extent does the school...</em></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>
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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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</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>
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</tbody>
</table>

### Systems for Improvement

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

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Area</th>
<th>Rating</th>
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</thead>
<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>
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<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>
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<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>
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</tbody>
</table>
Area of Celebration

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

Findings

The school has established small learning communities called houses to provide a personalized, supportive, and mutually-respectful learning environment that builds an inclusive culture involving student voice in decision-making. There are structures in place to reinforce this positive environment and support students’ academic and personal behaviors.

Impact

The school’s practices result in a safe environment and inclusive culture that supports progress toward school goals where student voice is meaningfully involved in decision-making. The house structure ensures that all students are known well by more than one adult who helps to support and coordinate academic and social-emotional learning.

Supporting Evidence

- School leaders and faculty believe that building a strong culture is imperative to creating a positive learning environment. The theory of action is that if the school community works collaboratively using data to assess the needs of students, and reacts responsively by planning and implementing differentiated, rigorous, engaging student-centered learning experiences, students will then display deep understanding of complex tasks in all content areas. The school promotes the character traits of respect, integrity, scholarship, and leadership and is organized in small learning communities called houses which are named after influential celebrities who exemplify the core values of the school. Each house has established a college connection such as Fordham University, Iona College, Columbia University, Manhattan School of Music and Mercy College. Each house has a team of assistant principal, student success leader (a teacher who oversees the house and provides academic and social-emotional support to students) counselor and teacher leaders. They conduct advisories, rallies, libations ceremonies (morning activities that provide selected students on a rotation basis the opportunity to reflect on positive behaviors, allowing all students to start the day in a positive note,) and assemblies to connect students with the house and the broader school community.

- Elected class presidents meet twice a month with the student success leader of their house to discuss issues and guide improvement efforts around school events, performance, or multicultural activities such as celebrations of African American History Month, Hispanic Heritage month, or St. Patrick’s Day. Additional opportunities for student leadership are provided, such as library leaders, language ambassadors, and community teams. To celebrate diversity, students read books by authors from different backgrounds and nationalities. This is integrated into the arts curriculum. For example, in a drama class, students were rehearsing *A Raisin in the Sun* as well as dances from different countries.

- One of the main goals of the house structure is to ensure that every child is known well by an adult, that no child goes unnoticed and that their social-emotional learning and academic needs are addressed immediately. Each team of adults has the same children for three years. During the meeting with students, they said that if they need support, they can go to any adult in the building including non-teaching staff such as the parent coordinator. Parents echoed this by sharing that the school has done a great job nurturing positive student-teacher-family relations to support their children’s needs. Guidance counselors provide social-emotional support to students as well as referring students to local agencies for social services. They also provide advisory sessions to students using *The 7 Habits of Highly Effective Teens*. The school also has a system to reward students for their behaviors in school. Each house follows school-wide attendance protocols to closely monitor students’ attendance patterns and take actions such as phone calls, home visits, and one-on-one conferences with parents or referral to social services. As a result of these efforts, the school has a year-to-date attendance of 95.8 percent.
Area of Focus

Quality Indicator: 1.2 Pedagogy  
Rating: Proficient

Findings

Across classrooms, teaching practices are aligned to the curricula and reflect an articulated set of beliefs about how students learn best. Teachers provide learners with multiple entry points into curricula.

Impact

Teaching practices are informed by the Danielson Framework for Teaching and instructional shifts that enable students to produce meaningful work products and demonstrate higher-order thinking. Although most lessons contained multiple entry points and extension opportunities, this was not effectively implemented in all classes.

Supporting Evidence

- Across classrooms, teaching strategies consistently reflect and support school-wide beliefs about how students learn best. Teachers elaborated on how those beliefs are informed by the Danielson Framework for Teaching and aligned to the curricula as they detailed, “We believe that students learn best when they have opportunities to work together in intentional groupings and engaging in high level discussions connected to the real world.” Most classes visited reflected this core belief. Across content areas, teachers engaged students in collaborative group activities. In an eighth-grade social studies class, students read different articles and political cartoons to determine the causes of World War I. Students engaged in conversations based on guiding questions such as “How did European countries try to stay safe in the years before 1914?” In a sixth-grade science class, students worked in groups to formulate a hypothesis on how different materials affect thermal energy.

- During the meeting with students, it was articulated that in most of their classes they are involved in group work activities where they have opportunities to learn from each other, exchange ideas, and disagree while providing a counter point. One ELL student reported that sometimes she has difficulty understanding certain words, but with the opportunity to engage in discussions with her peers, she is able to understand what is going on and share her ideas while learning new vocabulary words. Another student said, “I don’t like to participate much during whole class discussion, but in small group I am more comfortable because I have more opportunities to speak and listen to the group discussions.” One more student shares “I am in this group because during the kickstart activity, I was able to solve the word problem, so my teacher assigned me to this group.” As a result, the approach to use strategic groupings is supporting students to produce meaningful work products.

- Across classrooms, teaching strategies consistently provide students with multiple entry points into challenging tasks. In a seventh-grade science class focused on how humans are similar to squids, the teacher provided vocabulary supports and graphic organizers, and created opportunities for students to work in partnerships to dissect a squid. In the process students engaged in higher-order thinking while identifying the different external and internal parts of the squid, connecting their findings to their knowledge of human anatomy. When asked, students were able to explain if the squid was male or female. “This one is a female because of the eggs.” In a sixth-grade special education math lesson about slope, students were working in pairs where each pair had a differentiated task. Students were provided graphic organizers, visuals, calculators, and one-on-one teacher support. When one student was asked what would be a real-world application of learning about slope, the student said “Well, if we work in marketing, for example in the fishing industry... I will be able to know how are we doing in sales by looking at the slope.” However, this level of activities to engage students in high-level thinking has yet to be implemented in all classrooms. In many instances, teacher-led activities were observed when the teacher addressed the whole class, as well as posing some low-level questions. In some classrooms, poor time management led to lessons ending without a summary or reflection.
Additional Finding

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Quality Indicator:</th>
<th>1.1 Curriculum</th>
<th>Rating:</th>
<th>Proficient</th>
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Findings

Across content areas, school leaders and teachers collaborate to create curricula aligned to the Common Core Learning Standards and supported with the inclusion of real-world connections and academic tasks that consistently emphasize higher-order thinking skills.

Impact

As a result of coherent curricula and tasks that promote college and career readiness, all students, including English Language Learners (ELLs) and special education students, have access to cognitively challenging academic tasks connected to the real world.

Supporting Evidence

- Across content areas, school leaders and teachers collaborate to develop instructional planning documents that are aligned to the Common Core to meet student needs and to adjust the unit plans based on the results of the New York State standardized assessments, student data from formative and summative assessments, and student work. Instructional planning documents include strategies to support the needs of students at various levels, focusing on having students engage in rich and rigorous evidence-based conversations about text, using text-based evidence to support a position to make an argument in the writing process. In math, instructional planning documents show that there is a focus on deep understanding and application used in math specifically in solving real life problems as well as having other instructional shifts integrated across the curricula. The school’s collaborative approach to instructional planning across grade levels and subjects results in a coherent curriculum where students are receiving instruction to promote college and career readiness.

- Decisions to build coherence are evident in the alignment of curriculum maps and unit plans. For example, across content areas instructional planning documents include essential questions with real-world connections. Furthermore, a review of lesson plans showed that most teachers are incorporating components of effective practices aligned with the Danielson Framework for Teaching. This includes but not limited to: kickstart (a school approach for a do now of the lesson), misconceptions addressed, differentiated instructional groupings, checks for understanding, key questions, vocabulary development, and rigorous learning activities directly aligned to the Common Core.

- Teachers developed curricula with instructional plans that include challenging work and support for all students including ELLs and students with disabilities. Curricular and academic tasks emphasize rigorous habits and higher-order thinking skills and lesson plans reflect activities that require students to engage in complex tasks. In an eighth-grade English Language Arts (ELA) lesson students will engage in a Socratic Seminar discussion on gun control. For this activity the teacher will use text levels materials, visuals and graphic organizers to support ELLS and students with disabilities. In a seventh-grade science lesson plan students will dissect a squid to determine its structure and how each of its parts work together, then sketch and label different parts in a graphic organizer and complete a writing task about their findings based on their observations. To support ELLs and students with disabilities, graphic organizers with pre-labeled diagrams are included, and laptops are also available to provide added visuals, video clips, and translated key vocabulary. As a result of the school’s rigorous curriculum, students participate in challenging tasks that promote higher-order thinking and engage students in authentic learning experiences.
Additional Finding

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

Across classrooms, teachers use or create assessments, rubrics, and grading policies that are aligned with the school’s curricula. Teachers use frequent checks for understanding and students self-assess their work.

Impact

Actionable feedback is provided to students and teachers regarding student achievement. Teachers make effective adjustments to meet all students’ learning needs.

Supporting Evidence

- Students shared that they use rubrics in every subject, and how using these rubrics helps them get better grades. Students also understood the next steps to improve their assignments. Bulletin boards outside and inside classrooms evidenced the use of rubrics and actionable feedback with next steps. Students also receive verbal feedback from teachers, as was observed during classroom visits. One student, said “During my one-on-one conference with my teacher, we go over my work where I have to reflect on what I do well and what I need to continue working on. The teacher also provides me resources to move on with my work.” Another student added that “Sometimes these sessions happen during lunch hour where we can check in with our teachers, so it is more private.” The review of student work products revealed that teachers provide feedback in the form of glows and grows and next steps. For example, one feedback states “Your project reflects good understanding of the task. It includes the correct symbols and relevant textual evidence. Next step, expand on your explanation of the symbolic message.” A math feedback states, “Great job writing equations using slope. Some of your explanations need more detail. Use evidence to support your answer.” As a result of these teaching practices, most students are aware of their next steps in meeting their learning targets.

- Using an online assessment tool, teachers develop higher-order thinking questions to assess students during the kickstart of the lesson, then use the results to regroup students based on their initial response. The implementation of this practice varies across classrooms. For example, in a grade eight ELA class, while a student was facilitating a Socratic Seminar session, the teacher circulated about the room, recorded students’ responses and levels of participation. The teacher then shared her notes with the facilitator, who then told the class “Thank you for your responses, but now you have to cite textual evidence to cite your claims.” In other classes, teachers used the online tool at kickstart, regrouped students, circulated about the room checked on students’ progress towards their tasks and as the class continued, regrouped students based on their progress. In all but a few classes, the use of checks for understanding is yet to be fully implemented.

- During classroom visits in most lessons, students were engaged in self-assessment activities. For example, in students’ work products reviewed, one student wrote “I need improvement on finding the deeper meaning and using proper grammar and punctuation.” Students also engage in self-reflection, for example, “My essay includes textual evidence and a quote is correctly interpreted. However, I need to better develop my ideas clearly and sufficiently.” Peer assessment is another way to provide feedback for example, “Your work is correct and how you explained it, made me understand more. However, while your (sic) writing explanation make the words larger so it could look more clear.” As a result of engaging students in self-assessment activities, they are able to look at their work, feedback and use rubrics to determine their strength and needs to improve their work products.
School leaders consistently and effectively convey high expectations to the entire staff and provide ongoing professional development around best practices informed by the Danielson Framework for Teaching. School leaders and staff successfully partner with families and effectively communicate expectations connected to a path to college and career readiness.

Supporting Evidence

- School leaders consistently communicate high expectations to all staff through a staff handbook, one-on-one sessions with teachers followed by several informal sessions and ongoing professional development, as well as weekly editions of Principal's Bulletin. In this publication, the principal makes clear high expectations, reinforcing the implementation of what was learned in professional development sessions, gives shout-outs for the work of inquiry teams, informs on school events, and outlines and emphasizes school priorities. These expectations are supported through a cycle of observations and actionable feedback aligned to the Danielson Framework for Teaching and focused on strategies learned during professional development sessions, such as the schoolwide initiative, implementation of checks for understanding. Thus, school leaders and staff have a mutual accountability for supporting students to reach the high expectations and this collaboration demonstrates a collective accountability for staff growth.

- In addition, teachers observed their colleagues via inter-visitation or mentoring visits. This peer-to-peer structure allows teachers who are rated effective or highly effective to share best practices and learn from each other. Moreover, the school is part of the New Teacher Center (NTC) program where new teachers receive targeted assistance to grow in their teaching craft. These supports have promoted trust, greater collegiality, and collaboration across grades as reported by school administration and teachers. Teachers agreed that their practice has improved because of the collaborative structures, inter-visitation, and formative feedback from colleagues, specifically in using data to differentiate and create intentional groupings so students have more opportunities to display deep understanding of complex tasks in all content areas.

- School leaders and teachers communicate high expectations to families regarding college and career readiness via an online platform, Parent Association meetings, Family Night, parent teacher conferences, and other school events. Information about attendance, homework, and behavior is also shared throughout the year. Parents shared that they receive phone calls, letters, email, text messages, and use the school website. Before the school year starts a two-day summer orientation is held for incoming students and families where staff communicates core values and inducts new students into the school community. The school promotes several high school articulation events such as, including articulation nights, one-on-one parent meetings, high school fairs held at the school, trips to different high schools, and guest speakers. Also, each grade completes a college and career readiness unit with their literacy class and all subjects use real-world connections including guest speakers. The college connection through the house system has provided several opportunities for students. Students shared that they have gone on trips to several colleges, worked with volunteers from colleges in class and engaged in one-on-one tutoring weekly. Students have attended shows with college students and alumni have come back to speak with students. As a result of this work, the 2016-2017 School Quality Snapshot reflects that 97 percent of this school's former eighth graders earned enough high school credit in ninth grade to be on track for graduation.
Findings

All teachers engage in inquiry-based professional collaborations where they are responsible for analyzing student work and sharing best teaching practices. Distributed leadership structures are in place so that teachers contribute to instructional outcomes.

Impact

Team collaboration results in teachers sharing instructional practices that improve their instructional capacity and in teachers having a voice in decisions that impact student learning outcomes. Their capacity is strengthened through distributive leadership practices.

Supporting Evidence

- All teachers are engaged in structured professional collaborations such as curriculum teams across content areas, including arts, where they collaborate to write Common Core-aligned curricula. Weekly ongoing professional reflection and collaborations are built into the school schedule and use school-adopted protocols for looking at student work, study student data, unit and lesson plans and plans for inter-visitation. During these conversations, teachers share warm and cool feedback and home in on areas for improvement. The teams work on creating curriculum changes and share best practices. They develop strategies and instructional supports such as graphic organizers and formative assessment tools and refine practices aligned with the school’s key instructional goal of using data to create instructional groupings. A review of teacher team agendas and minutes indicates that during weekly professional collaborations, teachers align their team’s work to the school’s instructional focus. These ongoing professional collaborations support the improvement of instructional practice.

- In the observed math inquiry meeting, teachers used the Student Work Analysis protocol to focus on math questions from baseline and benchmark assessments. Each teacher brought samples of student work which they exchanged to identify student misconceptions in solving multi-step problems using fractions. Teachers analyzed students’ strengths and areas of growth, in addition to recommending instructional next steps. Teachers agreed that most the students are confused about how to find a common denominator; most apply whole-number reasoning by adding either the denominators or the numerators to determine the sum. Strategies suggested during the team meeting included reinforcing the use of CUBES strategy (circle the numbers, underline the question, box the key words, evaluate, and solve), providing models and step-by-step organizers, teachers’ one-on-one conferences, peer-to-peer support and manipulatives. The ongoing effort of teacher teams results in increased capacity to implement Common Core curricula and meet the needs of diverse learners.

- A distributed leadership structure is an integral part of the school culture. Teachers agreed that they have an input on key instructional decisions and stated that school leaders support them to develop their instructional leadership. For example, the school has instructional leads in all core content areas who take primary responsibility for facilitating team meetings and inter-visitation, participate in cabinet meetings, provide input on curriculum decisions, and facilitate professional learning. The instructional leads in Literacy made changes to the pacing calendar from 2016-2017 school year to this year’s pacing calendar. School leaders noted that the school is structured into four houses, and each has a teacher with the role of student success leader, running the house in collaboration with the assistant principal and guidance counselor assigned to the house. Teachers’ active participation in school wide initiatives, teacher team meetings, and school committees increases teachers’ leadership skills, and their participation in inquiry work to improve student learning across the school.