Quality Review Report

2017-2018

E.S.M.T- I.S. 190
Junior High-Intermediate-Middle 12X190
1550 Crotona Park East
Bronx
NY 10460

Principal: Castella Mckenzie

Dates of Review:
December 13, 2017 - December 14, 2017

Lead Reviewer: Liza Zarifi
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

#### Instructional Core

<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>1.1 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 Celebration</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>Area of Focus</td>
<td>Developing</td>
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### 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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### Systems for Improvement

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

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Area</th>
<th>Rating</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1.3 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>Additional Finding</td>
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<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>
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<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>
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Area of Celebration

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Quality Indicator:</th>
<th>1.2 Pedagogy</th>
<th>Rating:</th>
<th>Proficient</th>
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Findings

Across classrooms, teaching practices are aligned to the curricula and reflect shared beliefs about how students learn best that is informed by the Danielson *Framework for Teaching*. Students engage in frequent discussions and support each other’s work products through peer feedback.

Impact

Student work products and discussions reflect high levels of student thinking and participation through leveraging technology, small group instruction, and collaborative teaching practices.

Supporting Evidence

- Across classrooms, teaching practices are aligned to the curricula, including Teacher’s College Writing Program (TCWP) and Connected Math Project 3 (CMP3) and *GO Math!* in math classrooms. Students regularly worked in pairs or small groups and used tools and resources to explain their thinking, incorporate feedback, and engage in discussions. In a seventh grade English Language Arts (ELA) class, three teachers, including the general education teacher, the special education teacher, and the English Language Learner (ELL) teacher, supported students as they worked in small groups on a realistic fiction writing piece using resources from a TCWP unit of study. Students used a checklist to guide their work, and teachers took conferring notes as they worked with students. Additionally, there were opportunities for students to support each other with the use of the checklist and offer next steps to improve one another’s writing. In an eighth-grade math lesson, students worked on a lesson from the curriculum on functions, and the teacher utilized group work and discussion questions to engage students and differentiate instruction. Students solved problems in small groups, demonstrated their thinking on chart paper, and presented to the class.

- Across classrooms, student work products and discussions reflect high levels of student thinking and participation through the use of integrated technology, including laptops for writing work and plickers to respond to questions as a group. In a sixth-grade science lesson, the teacher utilized a plicker to engage students in a warm-up activity and assess learning. An eighth-grade ELA class edited sentences on the smartboard and shared their thinking with the class. A seventh-grade math class had individual laptops to engage in the work of the lesson, including an entrance ticket and warm-up activity. Students had opportunities to discuss their work with a partner as well. Technology and group work enabled students to demonstrate their thinking, try out strategies, and participate in the work of lessons.

- Across classrooms, teachers utilized questioning to engage students and encourage peer discourse. In a seventh-grade math lesson, the teacher used an “I Wonder, I Notice” protocol to give students a structure to reflect on math data and share with their partners. In a sixth-grade ELA lesson, students were asked to discuss with their partners and jot down the gist of each paragraph of a speech, while also capturing questions that arose about the text. In an eighth-grade math lesson, the teacher asked students to make a prediction about the structure of a graph and support their arguments. The teacher then asked students to use an equation to verify their predictions and engaged in a class discussion. Student work products and discussions reflected high levels of participation and collaboration and enabled students to demonstrate their thinking at different levels.
## Area of Focus

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

The school is developing in their use of common assessments to measure and track student progress toward goals across grades and subject areas. Across classrooms, teachers’ assessment practices inconsistently reflect the use of ongoing checks for understanding and student self-assessment.

### Impact

Systems, like the schoolwide data tracker, are still developing to facilitate the use of common assessments to make adjustments to curricula and instruction. Teachers’ assessment practices inconsistently reflect the use of checks for understanding, so that not all teachers are making effective adjustments to meet all students’ learning needs.

### Supporting Evidence

- The school is developing in their use of common assessments to measure and track student progress. The “central student tracking database” is an accountability and monitoring tool that has been created to allow school leaders and faculty to reflect on the data across grades and for individual students. The leadership team has used it with instructional lead teachers and is in the process of getting additional input from staff on the design and use of the tool. The database tracks student performance on common assessments such as the New York State ELA and math tests and Measures of Student Learning (MOSL) and will be an important tool to support the school’s goal of increasing the number of English Language Learners (ELLs) and students with disabilities achieving levels three and four on the New York State ELA test by five percent.

- School leaders and faculty utilize various common and teacher-created assessments to measure student progress. However, there are inconsistencies in the quality of certain assessments to measure progress and adjust instruction. Leaders and teachers reported using teacher-created assessments to assess mastery of standards within a unit. A mid-unit assessment from a seventh-grade English class included standards-aligned questions with quotations from the text embedded in responses. On the other hand, an ELA unit assessment targeted mainly recall questions and required limited use of textual evidence. For example, questions included “the author’s mother’s first husband was” and “what is the setting,” with only two of twenty-two questions requiring students to cite evidence. There are missed opportunities to ensure assessments are standards-aligned and used to inform curricular and instructional adjustments.

- Teachers’ assessment practices inconsistently reflect the use of ongoing checks for understanding and student self-assessment. Some teachers use strategies to check for understanding throughout a lesson, but there were missed opportunities to make effective adjustments to instruction. In a science lesson, the teacher used clickers to check for understanding on the do now, and 79 percent of the class responded correctly. However, the teacher reviewed the problem with the whole group, resulting in the do now activity taking fifteen minutes of instructional time. In an ELA lesson, students worked on writing the gist of each paragraph of a speech and were released to work independently after watching a video. Some students were unclear as to what the task was or how to find the gist. Thus, there was a missed chance to model and utilize a whole class check for understanding before releasing the students. In a math class, the teacher reviewed a warm-up activity with the whole group by giving the answer and asking for “hands up or thumbs up if you got it,” telling students, “if you got it wrong, you need to learn your vocabulary.” The teacher’s check for understanding was ineffective, as not all students responded, and no adjustment was made to instruction based on the responses received.
Findings

School leaders and faculty ensure that curricula are aligned to the Common Core Learning Standards (Common Core) and integrate the instructional shifts, including building content knowledge through texts and increased rigor in math through real-world problem solving. Curricula and academic tasks are planned and refined using student work and data with the support of instructional lead teachers.

Impact

The curricula and academic tasks build coherence throughout grades and subjects and consistently provide access for a diversity of learners through differentiated planning.

Supporting Evidence

- Leaders and faculty ensure curricula are aligned to the Common Core through planning from Common Core-aligned curricular resources and with the support of consultants and instructional lead teachers. Writing is emphasized across content areas through the TC writing curricula and through collaborative planning of integrated writing. A seventh-grade ELA unit of study on memoir and coming of age stories focuses on citing evidence and making inferences with both informational and fictional texts, integrating lessons targeting informative and narrative writing. A seventh-grade science unit on “The Nature of Science” integrates writing work on claims and supporting evidence with the content and literacy standards. A math lesson on ratios and proportional relationships includes real-world application problems with procedural practice, such as problems involving sales tax and purchasing clothing at a store. As a result of these practices, the curricula build coherence and promote college and career readiness for all students.

- The special education teachers support planning for students with disabilities and the integration of Individualized Education Program (IEP) goals across grades and subjects. Lesson plans indicate differentiation, including graphic organizers, vocabulary support using front-loaded definitions and pictures, strategic groupings, and teacher supports such as specific student small group conferences and strategies to use with particular students. An eighth-grade ELA lesson indicates specific supports including chunking and scaffolding the task, providing pre-planned questions and directions, and offering an oral review of task steps in a conference. A seventh-grade writing lesson indicates supports for students with disabilities including checklists, pairings, and choice of task. These planning practices provide access to the curricula for students with disabilities and support cognitive engagement.

- ELL teachers support planning and access for ELLs across grades and subjects. Vocabulary supports for ELLs in an eighth-grade math lesson include Spanish translation of content terms, and a seventh-grade writing lesson includes defined terms and frontloaded vocabulary, as well as plans for targeted conferences. A sixth-grade ELA lesson incorporates work on a language objective, offering specific language to use for comparison and contrast, and indicates language charts, frontloaded vocabulary, and bilingual dictionaries as supports for ELLs. These planning practices provide access to the curricula for ELLs and support cognitive engagement.
### Additional Finding

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<tr>
<th>Quality Indicator:</th>
<th>3.4 High Expectations</th>
<th>Rating:</th>
<th>Proficient</th>
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**Findings**

School leaders consistently communicate high expectations for professionalism and instruction to the entire staff. Teacher teams and staff establish a culture for learning that consistently communicates high expectations for all students.

**Impact**

School leaders provide training for staff and have a system of accountability for high expectations through professional development and cycles of observation and feedback. Teachers and staff offer ongoing and detailed feedback and guidance support that prepare students for the next level.

**Supporting Evidence**

- School leaders consistently communicate high expectations around instruction and communication to the staff and provide training through staff meetings and cycles of observation and feedback. The staff met at the beginning of the year in a session facilitated by the data and test coordinator to unpack the school quality snapshot and review expectations around professional development (PD) and communication. Teachers completed a staff survey to help inform PD needs and identify opportunities for teachers to turnkey learning. The PD planning team consists of administrators and teachers and meets frequently to plan upcoming PD topics and presenters and to communicate to staff. Teachers reported that staff are able to “take ownership of PD” and identified specific sessions turn-keyed by staff that were particularly helpful, including a session entitled “Meeting the needs of your students in the classroom,” led by the special education liaison. A math teacher led a recent PD on growth mindset and another on math discourse. School leaders and faculty support each other to provide training and have systems for accountability and improvement.

- Instructional lead teachers conduct classroom environment walkthroughs that provide teachers with accountability for consistency with common expectations. Moreover, lead teachers give frequent feedback to teachers on areas related to instruction and elements of the Danielson Framework for Teaching. The environment checklist components focus on classroom organization, mode of instruction (such as modeling or guided practice), teacher comments and feedback on student work, and the accessibility of vocabulary supports and technology for students. Teachers reported that the walkthroughs are a helpful tool and that they provide quick, specific feedback from the instructional lead teacher for their departments.

- Teacher teams and staff establish a culture for learning that communicates high expectations for students through common systems in classrooms, such as self-assessment, the use of common rubrics, emphasizing writing across content areas, and collaborative partner and group work. Students reported that the increase in writing work as they get into eighth grade is helping to prepare them for high school. Additionally, faculty communicates with students through the use of Jupiter Ed, an online application that keeps students informed about assignments due or missing and how they are performing across classes. Students have access to Regents classes and learn about the high school application process with the support of the school counselor. Students reported receiving individual support from the counselor to complete their applications. As a result of these practices, students receive ongoing feedback that prepares them for the next level.
**Additional Finding**

| Quality Indicator | 4.1 Teacher Support and Supervision | Rating: | Proficient |

**Findings**

School leaders support the development of teachers with effective feedback and next steps from frequent cycles of classroom observation and analysis of student work and data. Feedback accurately captures strengths and growth areas along with next steps aligned to the Danielson *Framework for Teaching*.

**Impact**

Effective observation feedback and analysis of student work and data articulate clear expectations for teacher practice and support teacher development.

**Supporting Evidence**

- School leaders support the development of teachers with cycles of observation and feedback. Teachers reported that feedback is “timely” and that leaders conduct follow-up observations to see a next step implemented. Observation reports across content areas include areas of strength, areas for growth, next steps, and a date for a follow-up observation, ranging from the 2016-2017 school year into the 2017-2018 school year, with growth seen particularly in the components of “Using Questioning and Discussion Techniques” (3b) and “Engaging Students in Learning” (3c) of the Danielson *Framework for Teaching*.

- Instructional lead teachers support teams with frequent rounds of feedback using the environmental checklist. One walkthrough from October offered feedback about adding more student-generated charts to the classroom and posting definitions of vocabulary words. Another walkthrough from December included positive feedback on areas related to the posting of the rubric for student work and the accessibility of an updated data binder in the classroom. A next step offered was to include more feedback directly into student notebooks. Teachers described the walkthroughs as “really helpful” and that they are an opportunity to receive timely and actionable feedback on a biweekly basis.

- Feedback for teachers captures strengths, areas for growth, and next steps using the Danielson *Framework for Teaching*. Feedback for a math teacher from 2016-2017 centered around 3b, “Using Questioning and Discussion Techniques,” which had been rated as developing in November 2016. Next steps included using accountable talk stems to facilitate peer discussion and using Webb’s *Depth of Knowledge* (DOK) levels to integrate more rigorous questions into lessons. The principal and teacher developed an action plan, and the principal set a time to return for a follow-up observation. In October 2017, the teacher was rated as effective in 3b, and observation feedback then focused on explicit modeling in the classroom to strengthen the workshop model of instruction, giving a time for a follow-up observation. An ELA teacher was rated as developing in three components in September 2016. Feedback and next steps for the teacher focused on planning for explicit modeling in lesson plans, using questions with evidence-based responses, and incorporating student self-assessment practices. The teacher was given weekly training sessions from the New Teacher Center coach and conducted intervisitations with other teachers. In March of 2017, the teacher was rated as effective in all components, and an area of strength noted was “questioning motivated rigorous and deep thinking among students,” followed by specific examples from the lesson. Next steps focused on ensuring that differentiation strategies for students with disabilities and ELLs were implemented during instruction. In October 2017, the teacher continued to be rated as effective, and an area of strength was in modifying the lesson for ELLs and students with disabilities. As these examples show, teacher feedback articulates clear expectations for practice and supports the growth of teachers.
Additional Finding

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<th>Quality Indicator:</th>
<th>4.2 Teacher Teams and Leadership Development</th>
<th>Rating:</th>
<th>Proficient</th>
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Findings

The majority of teachers are engaged in structured professional collaborations including department teams, the special education team, and the instructional leads team. Distributed leadership structures across the school promote shared leadership among the faculty.

Impact

Collaborative teams promote the achievement of school goals and strengthen the instructional capacity of teachers through the sharing of practices and discussions of student work. Teachers have a voice in key decisions that affect student learning across the school and are building leadership capacity through instructional lead positions.

Supporting Evidence

- The majority of teachers are engaged in structured, departmental teacher teams that promote the achievement of school goals and the implementation of the Common Core. Math team teachers met and reviewed three pieces of student work using a collaborative protocol. Teachers shared noticings about the work, such as “I noticed student one did not include the plus sign” and “I noticed that they skipped the first step and did not show work or explanations.” Teachers then asked questions about the work, such as “I wonder what part of the unit this task was given?” and “I’m thinking what do students need from the previous grade to support this?” Teachers shared potential next steps, including a focus on using precise language in math explanations and justifying solutions, and made connections to their own practices. The team decided to teach a problem-solving method used by one of the teachers, who would present the method and related student work at their next department meeting. As a result of teacher team work, teachers’ instructional capacity has strengthened, as evidenced in observation ratings. For example, four of the teachers on the math team have moved from effective and developing ratings in the Danielson Framework for Teaching components in 2016-2017 to all effective and highly effective ratings in observations in the current school year.

- Teacher leaders from each department serve as instructional leads and sit on the instructional cabinet, helping to support curricula selection and implementation, instruction, and turnkey information to support their department teams. Cabinet meetings begin with a department share, with each lead presenting a summary of the weekly departmental team meeting. A recent meeting included a discussion of the common team reading, a text on leveraging and improving teams, and plans for the TC coach’s visit to support teachers in classrooms. Teacher teams meet weekly, with the instructional lead setting the agenda and teachers rotating meeting facilitation and presentation of student work. As a result of this leadership structure, teachers have a voice in key decisions that impact student and teacher learning experiences.

- Special education and ELL teachers build leadership capacity through collaborating and supporting teams across content areas. Special education teachers support and collaborate with departmental teams and share best practices for instruction for students with disabilities. In one recent meeting, the special education liaison informed teachers about changes to promotional criteria for students with IEPs and shared strategies for providing access to the curricula for all learners. Additionally, a special education teacher supported the math team with establishing rich discourse practices, sharing five strategies to orchestrate productive math discourse and offering her classroom as a lab site for teachers to observe the strategies in practice.