Quality Review Report

2017-2018

School of Performing Arts
Junior High-Intermediate-Middle 12X217

977 Fox Street
Bronx
NY 10459

Principal: Dionne Williams

Dates of Review:
May 16, 2018 - May 17, 2018

Lead Reviewer: Carlos Perez
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 of Performing Arts 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>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>To what extent does the school...</strong></td>
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</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>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>Area of Focus</td>
<td>Developing</td>
</tr>
</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 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>
</tr>
</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 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>
</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>
</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>Area of Celebration</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>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Area of Celebration

4.2 Teacher Teams and Leadership Development

Rating: Well Developed

Findings

All teacher teams systematically analyze assessment data, student work and key elements of teacher practice for groups of targeted students and have access to a wide variety of distributed leadership opportunities that are embedded throughout the school.

Impact

Teacher teams’ practices have resulted in shared improvements in instruction and mastery of goals for groups of students. Teachers have a voice and play an integral role in decision making that affects student learning.

- Teacher teams meet regularly in order to systematically analyze assessment data, teacher practice and student work products. Through inquiry, teachers have established the school’s instructional look-fors, a set of 10 instructional practices that include student self-assessment, differentiated tasks, station work, and group and partner discussions. The use of these instructional look-fors to drive instruction has resulted in improved teacher practices, most notably in planning as all teachers are using the look-fors as a tool to drive and develop Common Core-aligned lesson plans, as evidenced in a shared lesson planning template utilized by teachers. Additionally, there has been mastery of goals for specific groups of students, most notably in math as evidenced by data from the online learning program and other assessment data collected in math. Data demonstrates that students with disabilities and students who have not yet met proficiency are meeting targeted goals, including a four percent increase in proficiency for a group if sixth graders, a seven percent increase in mastery in seventh grade, and the eighth-grade target group meeting their goal of increasing in mastery by six percent. Across the grades, teacher teamwork reflects systematic analysis of student work and assessment data in math, aligned with the school’s goals towards increasing student achievement.

- Teachers shared that distributive leadership practices are embedded throughout the school and that this has been one of the biggest growths they have seen in many years. Teachers explained that trust and openness have “grown significantly as a result of the distributive leadership roles.” These roles include teachers regularly turnkeying learning from professional development sessions to their team colleagues, subject-area leads, and teachers leading inquiry sessions. “I trust my colleagues more than ever,” is what one teacher stated during the teacher meeting. Additionally, school leaders noted that teachers are much more willing to create and lead decision-making initiatives on their own, such as implementing annotation strategies in classes. This is something that was seen both in pedagogical practices in the classroom and planning documents in the curriculum. In addition, implementing discussion protocols into lessons is something that was teacher team-led as a result of their findings from the inquiry process and is evident throughout classrooms. These strategies have had a direct result on overall student achievement proficiency levels. For example, math proficiency levels increased by a total of 16 percent while English Language Arts (ELA) proficiency levels have increased by 10 percent.

- During the review, teachers engaged in professionally structured inquiry meetings. Meetings observed focused teacher work time on analyzing student work products. An ELA team meeting demonstrated collaboration focused on generating next steps for specific groups of students. Teachers focused on students who are still struggling to analyze the details when constructing short responses. The team discussed and developed a set of next steps that included reading the text aloud to students, teacher modeling using specific strategies to help students annotate with a purpose, and review questions after the first or second read. Student work and data demonstrates collected by the team that reflects mastery of goals for specific students.
Area of Focus

| Quality Indicator: | 2.2 Assessment | Rating: | Developing |

Findings

Across classrooms, teachers use rubrics that are aligned to the school’s curricula, and use various methods of checking for student understanding and self-assessment.

Impact

Feedback to students as well as instructional adjustments to lessons in order to meet the learning needs of all students are inconsistent and uneven.

Supporting Evidence

- Feedback many times was not explicit and clear and failed to give specific next skills on which the student needed to work. Additionally, students explained that the feedback they receive is helpful sometimes but not all the times. For example, one student shared that there are times when he receives feedback in his writing that is, “Watch your spelling”, but not “about something that can help me improve as a writer.” Additionally, students shared that feedback is not always included in all assessments or assignments. One student shared how in some classes feedback is a “regular thing” and it happens all the time. However, the student went on to discuss how in her English Language Arts (ELA) class there are many times where she has to ask the teacher for feedback after an assignment because nothing is written for her to review.

- Teachers use a variety of ways to check for understanding, most notably conferring with students. During a sixth-grade math lesson, the teacher was conferring with a small group of students and assisted individual students in the group with areas in which they needed additional support. During an abridged-grade art class, as students worked, the teacher rotated to each group and conferred with the group and with individual students and used a check list in order to track student response. Yet in some classrooms visited, in-the-moment adjustments based on collected student responses were not fully implemented.

- In some of the student work products reviewed, feedback offered clear identification of student strengths and actionable next steps associated with the areas of growth. However, feedback on other work products was not as clear. For example, evidence of feedback to a student’s math assignment lists the glow, an area of strength, as, “basic understanding of systems through understanding linear functions,” and a grow, an area of improvement, that read, “solving systems graphically.” Feedback to a student’s written response section of a class assessment read, “You clearly followed the structure”. Other evidence of feedback is written in cursive which made it difficult for students to read and be able to use this information to improve their next piece of work. Overall, feedback on student work does not provide specific enough details to support further improvement.
Additional Finding

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

Findings

School staff make sure that all curricula are rigorous, aligned to the Common Core Learning Standards, and integrate instructional shifts connected to the use of academic vocabulary. Academic tasks consistently emphasize higher-order thinking skills and rigorous activities for all students.

Impact

Purposeful decision making and consistent reflection of rigorous tasks in the curricula builds coherence and promotes college and career readiness for all students.

Supporting Evidence

- Evidence of planning for writing components was seen throughout curricular documents. A seventh-grade social studies lesson plan included tasks for students to cite textual evidence and include key vocabulary words into their written responses. A sixth-grade math lesson plan engaged students in an exit ticket writing activity that required them to answer the question, “The front row in a movie theatre has 23 seats, if you were asked to sit in the seat that occupied the median position, in which seat would you have to sit?” Students are required to give a clear written response to this question. A seventh-grade ELA lesson plan required students to construct personal life experience narratives using real or imagined experiences or events using specific techniques, relevant descriptive details, and well-structured event sequences. The lesson plan objective states that students are to write to an audience with a purpose. There was evidence of planning for students to edit, revise and rewrite while focusing on a target purpose. Furthermore, formative assessment planning includes allowing students to peer assess their work.

- Curricular documents emphasizes rigorous tasks for all students including English Language Learners (ELLs) and students with disabilities, and offers various ways to support these students. A seventh-grade science lesson plan focuses on students dissecting and comparing a chicken wing to a human arm and offers students visual supports such as detailed labeled diagrams, step-by-step lab instructions and the use of graphic organizers for them to use during the procedure. A seventh-grade social studies lesson plan reflects tasks where students were required to detail the reasons why framers of the Constitution made the law creating process so complicated. In order to assist students, planning included an animated video clip that gave the detailed steps of how a bill becomes a law, as well exemplars and teacher modeling that details how students’ final work products should look which connects the rigor of the lesson for all students, while using the ensuring all students have access to higher-ordering thinking.

- Science lesson plans reflect multi-step procedures during experiments. A seventh-grade science lesson plan reflects a tasks where students are understanding the skeletal and muscular systems of animals by dissecting and analyzing a chicken wing and comparing it to a human arm. A math lesson plan dealing with linear functions addresses the Common Core Learning Standards in that students will know that lines are widely used to model relationships between two quantitative variables. The lesson plan asked students to compare the rate of change of different functions and find the equation of a line. Students are asked to plot and “draw the line of best fit of a scatter plot and write an equation of the line of best fit. An eighth-grade science lesson plan contains a task where students are measuring, observing, and describing objects and their density. The task includes students are writing detailed responses using the appropriate academic vocabulary to inform and explain their observations. Thus, curricular documents across the content areas evidence alignment to the Common Core Learning Standards.
Additional Finding

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

Pedagogical practices across the school are aligned to the school’s belief in how students learn best, such as student discourse, and by providing all students a variety of entry points into the instruction.

Impact

All learners are engaged in challenging rigorous tasks that result in students demonstrating higher-order thinking in meaningful work products.

Supporting Evidence

- During a seventh-grade social studies lesson, students had many opportunities to not only discuss within their groups, but also share their group discussions with the class. The lesson began with a short animated clip that explained the process of how a bill becomes a law. Then, students engaged in group discussion in order to answer the question, “Why did the framers make the law creating process so complicated?” Students were heard sharing responses such as, “There are so many steps because laws are serious”, and “in order to make sure that the law is good for all.” reflecting analysis in their thoughts. During a sixth-grade math lesson, students were working in groups in order to determine the median of a set of data. Students were seen being active members by sharing thoughts and ideas in their groups. This is aligned the school’s belief that student-to-student discussion is a pathway for student learning.

- Throughout classrooms visited, teaching strategies offered all students active entry into the lesson, mainly through teacher modeling and small group instruction. During a seventh-grade science lesson, the teacher worked with a pre-determined group of students who were identified as needing additional assistance. The teacher offered individualized instruction and tools such as sentence starters to support student writing. In addition, throughout classrooms, there were posted protocols to help students with discussion, writing, and self-assessment. During a seventh-grade ELA lesson, there was evidence of teacher read-aloud strategies that also modeled how to annotate as the teacher read. A science lesson allowed students the opportunity to engage in a chicken wing dissection which gave students a chance to identify and compare the skeletal and muscular system of a chicken and human being. The teacher offered students a detailed lab report, labeled diagrams for visual support and graphic organizers for students to document their thoughts and findings.

- Consistent with the school’s belief, during an ELA lesson, students engaged in group and class discussions, whereby students looked to generate small and important moments in their lives in order to begin writing their own personal narratives. Students shared with their partners and the class a time in their lives when they felt happiness or sadness. Students utilized these responses and created a list of emotional moments in their notebooks. The teacher modeled by sharing with the students a personal time in his life and how he would use those moments to create his personal narrative. During an eighth-grade science lesson, students engaged in discussions and worked collaboratively in order to compare the densities of objects/liquids. As students engaged in conversations, they could be overheard stating, “If an object has a density of greater than 1.0 the object will sink”, and “Do you mean weight or density?” reflecting analysis in science.
Additional Finding

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

School leaders and staff consistently communicate high expectations to all students and their families associated with a path to high school and college and career readiness.

Impact

Ongoing feedback and support is provided to both students and their parents in order to understand and achieve all schoolwide expectations.

Supporting Evidence

- Parents are made well aware of their children’s academic progress through a variety of ways. Firstly, all parents feel that they can come to the school at any moment and be seen by either a teacher or administrator. All parents shared how there is an open-door policy that welcomes them and makes them feel as if they are part of the school community. Parents also explained how they track their children’s progress through web-based platforms like i-Ready and the school’s gradebook system, Skedula, which the parents can access at any moment. Parents also expressed how school staff celebrate student successes many times throughout the year and those are also valuable moments where parents can interact with staff in order to understand their children’s progress.

- School leaders shared how in the past there was a “disconnect” between the school and families with respect to the high school application process. This led to parents not being happy with the high school their child would attend and to large amounts of students applying to high schools late in the year; this is no longer the case. Parents shared how there are numerous workshops throughout the year that deal with the high school application process, and school leaders explained that this year, there was only one student who applied late. Parents are knowledgeable about high schools, and most importantly, what high schools would be the best fit for their child. Parents explained how the staff “works very closely with families” in order to help them understand the progress of their children.

- Students have a clear understanding of their progress and what is needed to not only move to high school, but to also be college and career ready. All students shared their knowledge and active use of Skedula and how they are regularly monitoring it in order to track their progress. Students also understand the process of being grouped in class by skill level. They explained that if they are in a group with students that are having difficulty with a specific skill, then they know they must work harder. In addition, students shared how some of the feedback they receive during conferencing with teachers is also valuable in understanding how they are performing in their classes and how to “continue to improve.”
### Additional Finding

<table>
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<tr>
<th>Quality Indicator:</th>
<th>4.1 Teacher Support and Supervision</th>
<th>Rating:</th>
<th>Proficient</th>
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**Findings**

Teacher development is supported through a regular cycle of frequent classroom observations that offers teachers feedback that captures strengths, challenges and outlines clear next steps.

**Impact**

Feedback to teachers is actionable, timely and offers clear expectations in order to elevate teachers’ instructional practices.

**Supporting Evidence**

- Feedback to a social studies lesson celebrated the teacher for developing a positive rapport with her students which resulted in a lesson with “minimal interruptions to the learning environment.” The school leader identified questioning and discussions as well as assessing student learning as areas that need immediate attention and offers tools and resources in order to help the teacher implement the identified strategies. Furthermore, the school leader requests that the teacher submit a lesson plan outlining the changes by a specific date. Feedback in a teacher’s math observation report commends the teacher for the ways the teacher “provided students an opportunity to receive additional support after checking for understanding.” Then, the school leader offers two areas for improvement: providing students with tasks which require them to justify their reasoning and allowing for more differentiation of math tasks. The school leader informs the teacher that he will return in one week in order to assure that recommendations are implemented.

- School leaders have divided their observation schedule into six cycles throughout the year. The very first cycle of the school year is dedicated to those teachers who are new and or need additional support. These teachers are also assigned an instructional coach that works with them throughout the year and concentrates on the areas of focus that school leaders identified. School leaders and instructional coaches also perform schoolwide instructional walk-throughs together in order to norm their practice and identify areas that need additional support. Results from walk-throughs are very often the main focus of instructional cabinet meetings where lead teachers, school leaders and instructional coaches decided on the areas in which teachers require more support.

- Teachers receive feedback on their formal and informal observations reports through meetings and check-ins that happen regularly throughout the school year. During initial planning meetings, school leaders and teachers start by reviewing feedback from observation reports and analyzing assessment data along with student work products. As a result, teachers have seen an improvement in the areas of questioning and rigor in several observation reports reviewed which is part of the school's instructional focus is for the year.