Quality Review Report

2017-2018

Fannie Lou Hamer Middle School
Junior High-Intermediate-Middle 12X286

1001 Jennings Street
Bronx
NY 10460

Principal: Abbey Wilson

Dates of Review:
May 23, 2018 - May 24, 2018

Lead Reviewer: Carlos Perez
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

Fannie Lou Hamer Middle School 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><strong>To what extent does the school...</strong></td>
<td></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>Area of Celebration</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>Area of Focus</td>
<td>Developing</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 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...**

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<thead>
<tr>
<th>Area</th>
<th>Rating</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1.3 Make strategic organizational decisions to support the school’s instructional goals and meet student learning needs, as evidenced by meaningful student work products</td>
<td>Additional Finding</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3.1 Establish a coherent vision of school improvement that is reflected in a short list of focused, data-based goals that are tracked for progress and are understood and supported by the entire school community</td>
<td>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>Additional Finding</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5.1 Evaluate the quality of school-level decisions, making adjustments as needed to increase the coherence of policies and practices across the school, with particular attention to the CCLS</td>
<td>Additional Finding</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Area of Celebration

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

Findings

All staff ensure that curricula is not only aligned to the Common Core Learning Standards but strategically integrate instructional shifts, most notably speaking, reading, and writing. All students have access to academic tasks that are rigorous and emphasize high levels of thinking.

Impact

There is coherence of curricular planning across all grades and subject areas that promotes next level learning and allows all students including English Language Learners (ELLs), and students with disabilities to be cognitively engaged.

Supporting Evidence

- Schoolwide, all curricular planning documents reflect a coherence of standards-aligned practice by following a common lesson plan template that show evidence of including work and student tasks centered on the Common Core. Starting with a “Link to Unit Plan”, each lesson states what students previously learned, what students will learn today and what students should look forward to learning tomorrow. All lesson plans included a section for the standards-based learning target, the supports of the learning target and the school’s instructional look-fors, a set of instructional strategies such are reading and writing that support the school's belief in how students learn best. Additionally, all lesson plans follow the same format with respect to how teachers include differentiated tasks and incorporate them into each lesson, naming the specific students and listing the supports the students will receive. During the meeting with students, they shared how all their lessons are “planned in the same way” and how that makes it easy for them to understand what is expected.

- A seventh-grade science lesson plan includes a task where students are working on eight components of their Animal Behavior Science Fair project. During the main section of the lesson plan, the tasks includes how students will work in groups while the teacher will help students analyze perspectives and construct arguments for their projects. Scaffolds for English Language Learners (ELLs) and students with disabilities include specific names of students who will be provided with graphic organizers specific to their group, a graphing checklist as well as a procedural checklist to keep students organized and on task. A seventh-grade English Language Arts (ELA) lesson plan contains a task which requires students to create a flash draft of a proposal letter that elaborates on a social issue of the student’s choice. The task contains real-world current articles such as *The Curious Case of Trayvon Martin* and *What Roll Does Race Play When Black Defendants Face a Jury of Whites*. To support student’s literacy needs, planning includes grouping students by their current Lexile levels and ELLs are offered directions and a checklist in their native language. These activities and tasks are aimed at emphasizing high rigor for all students.

- Coherence is seen throughout planning documents as school leaders and teachers assure that all curricula is aligned to the Common Core by including components throughout lesson plans requiring students to speak, read and write. For example, an eighth-grade math lesson plan included ways that students would use the week’s Word Generation words to construct both questions in the context of the math lesson and written responses to math word problems. An eighth-grade social studies lesson plan includes a writing component for students to show the policies leading to low voter registration among African-Americans, a speaking component for students to discuss and understand how Mississippi prevented African-Americans from voting, and a reading component where students read and analyze Fannie Lou Hamer’s testimony.
Area of Focus

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

Teaching strategies are becoming aligned to the curricula and beginning to reflect the school’s beliefs in how students learn best, which includes student discussion.

Impact

Student work products reflect uneven levels of thinking and participation.

Supporting Evidence

- During a seventh-grade science lesson, students had ample opportunities to read, write and have discussions with peers. Students engaged in group discussions in order to set goals and next steps for their science projects, read about the criteria for the parts of their science fair and wrote out information for their assigned section of the animal behavior science project. During an eighth-grade ELA lesson, students had opportunities to engage in group and partner discussions in order to analyze the changes in a character and why they felt the character wants to take a stand for what is right. However, during a seventh-grade ELA lesson, not all students engaged completely in their work. During group discussions, there were some student misconceptions and they were not addressed, leading to not all students being engaged in the lesson and missing out on addressing the school’s belief relative to engaging students in discussions to impact their learning.

- Some student work products reflect high levels of understanding. Some student writing pieces contain the use of higher level vocabulary and student voice. For example, a response to whether a student felt a character changed through a specific set of pages included the student explaining how the character is now brave. The response included giving text-based evidence to support his claim. The student also quoted several lines from the book in order to further support his stance. Evidence of student responses to a math word problem included if students felt more confident predicting the future sales of ice cream given temperature or predicting someone’s score on a final exam based on the hours spent studying. The students’ response was articulate and cited evidence from the graph that was charted as a way to justify the answer. However, in other classes, student work products had limited responses, sometimes only a sentence or two.

- There is a belief in the school that students learn best and are engaged when participating in group and partner discussions in order to answer higher-level Depth of Knowledge (DOK) questions. However, this belief of pedagogy was not observed in every class visited. During an eighth-grade math lesson, students were participating in group discussions in order to have them justify predictions using math data and prior knowledge. During group work, each student had an active role, such as reader, time keeper, and summarizer. Student groups were respectful and all members of the group had an active and equal voice. However, during a sixth-grade math lesson, many students did not answer questions, were not completely engaged with the class or peers in a discussion, and were left with unanswered questions as to the work.
Additional Finding

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

Teachers use assessments and rubrics that are aligned to the school's curricula. Teachers’ assessment practices consistently reflect on-going checks for understanding, most notably conferencing with students.

Impact

Teachers provide students with feedback that is actionable and make adjustments to curricula based on feedback from student work and assessments.

Supporting Evidence

- Evidence of teacher feedback to students was seen throughout the school. Student math work products contains feedback that is actionable, specific and timely. Feedback also includes the learning target that the student is to address. For example, feedback on a student’s math assignment confirms that the student is able to meet the learning target of justifying predictions of future values using a line of best fit. The teacher offers the student feedback for his next assignment that read, “Draw a line of best fit that evenly splits the data and shows the overall trend in each paper.” The feedback also includes an exemplar of what the teacher was referring to. Feedback to a student’s writing assignment includes the learning target of writing an evidence-based claim connecting two texts. The teacher offers a glow that commends the student for writing a “great and concise claim connecting the texts”, and a grow that asked the student to “go deeper with his explanations and elaborate further on the connections being made.”

- Throughout classrooms visited, teachers consistently check for student understanding, primarily through student conferencing. During a seventh-grade science class, the teacher circulated the classroom and conferenced with individual students and groups. The teacher used a checklist to collect data from students and offered them verbal feedback. During a sixth-grade science lesson, the teacher confered with students offering feedback and memorialized the conferences using a checklist. In addition, students had an opportunity to self-reflect using a checklist to review their writing prior to handing it in. The checklist helped students by guiding them to include a greeting, state a claim, include reasons to support the claims, and end with a concluding sentence. During the student meeting, students explained how peer and self-assessment happen regularly in their classes and “really helps to make sure we limit our mistakes.”

- Students explained how helpful the feedback they receive from their teachers is and how frequently feedback is received. During the student meeting, one student shared her portfolio and showed how it was full of post-it notes that offered all sorts of feedback. The student had highlighted feedback that she felt was useful to her in order for her to be able to refer to it in the future. Other students shared how the feedback not only comes from teachers, but from peers and from self-assessment as well. Throughout classrooms visited, examples of posted student work products evidenced actionable feedback attached to rubrics. Much of the feedback used specific rubric language and students were able to make connections to the rubric when explaining the feedback process.
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

The school consistently communicates expectations to both students and their families that are connected to a path to next level learning and college and careers.

Impact

Families understand progress towards all expectations and staff offer ongoing feedback and supports that prepare students for the next level.

Supporting Evidence

- In order to keep parents fully aware of their children’s progress, the school sends out monthly progress reports detailing student development towards mastery. Parents explained how helpful it is to receive monthly reports as opposed to quarterly reports that other schools send out. The progress report uses a Standards Mastery Grading Scale and rates students on a scale from one to four for specific components associated with each subject area. Parents are offered workshops that teaches them how to read progress reports and answer questions that they may have. In addition, all parents have access to iReady and can track their children’s literacy progress through the online platform. Teachers shared that having monthly progress reports has resulted in an increase in the amount of times they are meeting with parents, and parents are communicating with them much more regularly to ask questions about the progress reports.

- The school has several practices that are connected to college and career readiness for all students. Additionally, in order to expose students to college and universities, all classrooms in the school are named after a specific college, and students had to complete a research project on their classroom’s school. The school conducts several overnight college trips to schools like Howard and Yale Universities. Students have opportunities to ask questions and gather information pertaining to careers. During the school’s advisory period, students take part in career exploration, giving them ample opportunity to research and ask questions about areas in which they have an interest. Furthermore, the students take part in community mentoring twice a year where community members and alumni come into the school and sit with students who have an interest in similar careers.

- Parents and teachers work together in order to assure that students are supported. The school implements workshops to assist parents in helping their children with homework. Parents explained how this “really helps support their children.” Homework for all subjects and grades is posted on the school’s social media sites which currently have over 60 followers. Additionally, teacher and parents both explained how through the school’s advisory program, advisors regularly call parents in order to keep parents informed as to their children’s progress. Several parents shared how the school regularly communicates about everything from attendance to after school programs. Parents feel fully informed about everything that goes on in school and know that if they need anything, they can come to the school and always speak to someone.
Additional Finding

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

School leaders support teachers through a frequent cycles of teacher observations that offer them effective feedback that captures strengths and offers clear next steps.

Impact

Feedback articulates clear expectations towards teachers’ instructional practice and supports teacher development.

Supporting Evidence

- Teacher observations are conducted formally and informally throughout the school year. School leaders make a strategic decision to have the first observation as an informal, followed by a formal one, except for those teachers who require additional support, they usually receive a formal observation initially. There is also a strategic alignment between professional development (PD) and the observation process as school leaders align specific PD to the four observation cycles conducted yearly. According to school leaders, this helps them to focus during observation on the strategies presented during the corresponding PD. The principal also shared how she has implemented a cycle of norming sessions with the school’s assistant principal. They visit classrooms together several times per year in order to norm the observation process and focus closely on what is expected instructionally from each teacher.

- All teachers receive support with feedback that is actionable, timely and offers them clear next steps. For example, feedback to a teacher’s reading workshop lesson, commends the teacher for how students took an active role in monitoring their own behavior and/or that of other students against established classroom standards of conduct. Next steps included structuring the discussion groups with clear protocols and developing scaffolds and extensions to individual groups of learners. A second observation report commends the teacher for how students were focused on giving feedback to peers using a rubric. Next steps to be implemented within the upcoming week include making sure that students are clear on the success criteria for strong and effective feedback and making sure that the teacher provides a clear “think aloud” model and example for whatever new information they are sharing in the lesson.

- In addition to the formal observation process, school leaders, instructional coaches and teachers visit classrooms together and document all visits using the school’s “Instructional Focus Observation Note catcher” that is based on teacher’s strengths. This form identifies all of the instructional look-fors that teachers should be implementing in their lessons and identities areas for each observer to list strengths and strength-based next steps. One example of teacher feedback in a note catcher identifies the teacher’s strength as always being prepared and always offering students strong content instruction. The strength-based next steps include developing questions to include more open-ended questions.
Findings

All teachers are engaged in inquiry-based collaborations that systematically analyze key elements of assessment data and student work products for specific students. Teachers engage in effective distributive leadership structures that are embedded throughout the school.

Impact

There is shared improvement in teacher practice as well as mastery of goals for groups of students. In addition, teacher leaders play an integral role in key decisions that have a direct affect in student learning.

Supporting Evidence

- Teachers engaged in an inquiry session where they analyzed teacher practice as well as the student work generated from a lesson. The presenting teacher explained that she has been using a new protocol for targeted students where they have to document their discussions and determine what role each person will have for the discussion. The teacher explained how at the end of the lesson, students completed the discussion notes section of the lesson and shared the next steps. During the meeting, each teacher was able to give feedback and offered next steps on how to improve instruction that will further support students. The teacher reflected on her colleagues’ feedback and offered ways she would take that feedback and implement it into her future lessons. Furthermore, during the meeting, teachers shared how their teamwork with respect to working to increase math vocabulary has led to increases in student achievement in math. Documents reviewed from previous math team meetings reflect how the work of the math team with respect to strengthening math vocabulary and assuring that students use math vocabulary in their responses. As a result, iReady data shows how eighth-grade students met their targeted goal bypassing their goal of a nine percent to 18 percent in algebraic reasoning, while 24 percent of eighth-grade students mastered the math standard regarding understanding two-dimensional figures.

- Examples of distributive leadership practices are embedded throughout the school. Each grade level has a teacher who serves as grade lead. In addition, there are other teachers who take on a leadership role and serve as vertical team leads. Grade leads act as instructional and curricular support colleagues and as decision-making liaisons with the school leaders. Furthermore, teachers are regularly contributing their knowledge and experience during inquiry and curriculum meetings as they look to increase student achievement and improve the classroom instruction. Teachers of students with disabilities are leaders in the school and have conducted training around specifically designed instruction. The purpose of these meetings is to assist teachers with specific individual students, which scaffolds they would benefit most from, set learning targets, add extensions, and extra look-fors for those specific students. One teacher-led decision led to the development of two-week lesson cycles that allow subject-area teams to not only engage in inquiry, but where teachers are also observed by their colleagues and the team comes up with next steps for all team members to implement in support of increasing student outcomes.

- As a result of the work that teachers commit to in their teams, there is improvement in teacher practice throughout the school. Discussion protocols and consistent ongoing checks for understanding are regularly implemented. As a result, a review of teacher data reflects an increase in the quality of teacher practice on student engagement and assessment practices. A review of past ELA team meeting agendas and planning documents reflects various reading strategies resulting from team discussions such as using visualization to make mental pictures or sensory images as students read, and developing questions that teachers are implementing to support struggling readers and challenge others. Thus, this has led to increases in student master of target goals across the school in reading. From fall to spring, sixth-grade students demonstrate meeting the 41 percent targeted growth goal set by iReady. In addition, all sixth-grade students met the targeted reading goal of increasing at least one grade level by midyear.