Quality Review Report

2017-2018

M.S. 301 Paul L. Dunbar
Junior High-Intermediate-Middle 08X301
890 Cauldwell Avenue
Bronx
NY 10456

Principal: Hesham Farid

Dates of Review:
May 9, 2018 - May 10, 2018

Lead Reviewer: Lenneen Gibson
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. 301 Paul L. Dunbar 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

**Instructional Core**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>To what extent does the school...</th>
<th>Area</th>
<th>Rating</th>
</tr>
</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 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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<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>Area of Celebration</td>
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</table>

### 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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</tbody>
</table>
Area of Celebration

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Quality Indicator:</th>
<th>3.4 High Expectations</th>
<th>Rating:</th>
<th>Proficient</th>
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</table>

Findings
School leaders consistently communicate high expectations for instruction and professionalism through the Dunbar Digest and the “Dunbar Classroom.” Teachers and staff establish a culture for learning by exposing students to college life and museum curation.

Impact
A system of accountability for high expectations is upheld for the staff through instructional walks and the observation process. Guidance counselors conduct high school articulation meetings with students, establishing high expectations and preparing them for the next level.

Supporting Evidence
- The school leader articulates high expectation for instruction and professionalism through the weekly Dunbar Digest newsletter. The newsletter keeps the staff apprised of activities occurring around the school via a calendar of events. In addition, the newsletter addresses instructional expectations, such as incorporating stop and jot and turn and talk strategies into each lesson, which are in alignment with the instructional focus of making thinking visible. The newsletter provides links to materials to support instruction as well as professional articles such as, “20 Ways to Provide Effective Feedback for Learning.” Written memos to the staff detail expectations for in-the-moment feedback to students and upcoming observation cycles. Teachers are held accountable through the observation process and by instructional walk-throughs.
- A staff handbook delineates high expectations for professionalism and the learning environment, while written communication such as “The Dunbar Classroom” delineates the expectations for instructional delivery. Articulated expectations include a workshop model of instruction, the use of formative assessment, and student engagement strategies, all of which are expected to be used in all classrooms. New teachers undergo an orientation and are provided with support in the facets of the Danielson Framework for Teaching through onsite and district-wide professional development that is targeted towards new teachers. Teachers conduct inter-visitation and provide each other feedback, supporting mutual accountability among some pedagogues.
- Teachers clearly articulate high expectations for projects and tasks that lead to college and career readiness for all students. The school has an in-house, student-curated museum exhibit that was created in a partnership with the New York Historical Society. Each grade produced hand-made artifacts that mirrored a historical period, such as the American Revolution and the Industrial Revolution, or a particular group, like Native People. Students also produced a documentary about the artifacts, their processes for creating the artifacts, and the relevant historical context of their work. In addition, students serve as docents for the exhibit and students mentioned that the exhibit has supported their work in history classes.
- The school is part of the College Access for All initiative that exposes students to college life. Students visit colleges such as Binghamton University and Lincoln University to learn about college life, sitting in on classes and immersing themselves in the college experience. During the student meeting, students discussed their college visits and mentioned that they look forward to attending college in the future. Guidance counselors conduct high school articulation meetings with students to select their future high schools and prepare them for the high school learning experience.
Across most classrooms, teaching practices reflect an articulated set of beliefs about how students learn best, including making their thinking visible, which was evidenced in student work products and discussions.

Impact
Students work products and discussions reflect high levels of thinking and participation in most classrooms, thus making their thinking visible. However, missed opportunities in some classrooms hinder students’ ability to demonstrate ownership of their learning.

Supporting Evidence

- Across classrooms, instruction reflects the belief that students learn best by making their thinking visible in writing and discussions. In a sixth grade English Language Arts (ELA) class, the lesson objective required students to weigh the positive and negative messages in the text, *Inside and Out*. Students engaged in a turn and talk to share positive and negative details about the text, writing them down, and posting their notes on poster paper. The teacher conducted a read aloud from the text and asked the students to engage in another turn and talk to respond to the prompt, “What are the details that emerged from what I just read?” In a seventh-grade social studies class, students discussed the passages they read, citing evidence from the text and relating it to the lesson’s objective “To explain how the principles of Jacksonian democracy expanded the political power to the common man.” However, in a seventh-grade Integrated Co-teaching (ICT) mathematics class, students were tasked with using the formulas for circumference and area to calculate the radius and diameter of a circle. In this class, there were missed opportunities for students to engage in structured discussions about their methodology for solving the assigned problems, for this lesson, the teacher lead the majority of the discussion.

- In a sixth-grade social studies ICT class, students worked collaboratively to discern how the geographic features of Italy supported the development of Rome. As students participated in a turn and talk to discuss the geography of ancient Rome, they were overheard mentioning that Italy is a peninsula that had a rich soil and a surplus of crops. Students were also labeling a map of Italy to note features such as mountain ranges and bodies of water. Similarly, in a sixth-grade mathematics class, students were engaged in a station activity to calculate mean, median, and the mode presented in scenarios at each station. Students were discussing their strategies and chronicling their processes used in the calculations. Students were also heard justifying their answers to one another in the groups, thus making their thinking visible and demonstrating ownership of their learning. However, such high levels of thinking and ownership were not evident across some of the classrooms visited.

- In a seventh-grade ELA class, students engaged in group discussions about how to avoid stereotyping and what makes a character unique. Students discussed their self-selected texts and engaged in a turn and talk about the harmful effects of stereotyping. A student commented that an African-American child in her book was steered from doing ballet because of her background. Students used notes to do a stop and jot about the harmful effects of stereotyping. Students watched a short video clip of people discussing their negative experiences of being stereotyped. This was followed up with students connecting their discussions to universal themes of “don’t judge a book by its cover.” Similarly, in a sixth-grade ELA class, students discussed the positive and negative attributes of the characters in their books and evaluated the evidence to substantiate their character’s traits using text details to support their answer. In these classes, teaching practices supported the demonstration of higher-order thinking. However, similar instructional practices were not evident in some classes.
Findings
Teachers incorporate the Common Core Learning Standards into curricula and integrate the instructional shifts of citing textual evidence and writing from sources. Curricula and academic tasks demonstrate rigorous habits across content areas.

Impact
Curricula and academic tasks provide access for all learners by emphasizing higher order thinking skills. School leaders and faculty build coherence, and promote college and career readiness.

Supporting Evidence

- In an eighth-grade ELA lesson plan, the teacher cited Common Core Standards and the instructional shift of citing textual evidence to support analysis of what the text says. The lesson requires students to use details from the text, *Inside Out*, to note the positive and negative events related to the characters. The lesson plan noted the activity as a read aloud with passages being re-read with verbal reminders and translated texts in a student’s native language. In another ELA lesson plan, students also had to cite evidence from the text to support the positive and negative events regarding the characters in their texts. In a sixth-grade social studies lesson plan, the instructional shift of drawing evidence from informational texts to support analysis was cited. The lesson required students to use a graphic organizer to support them in identifying the benefits of the geographical details of Italy. The integration of the instructional shifts of citing textual evidence and drawing evidence from written sources builds coherence and promotes college and career readiness for students.

- Planned academic tasks require students to think critically and to ask questions. An ELA task required students to construct an argumentative essay about whether child soldiers should be prosecuted or be considered victims. The task includes graphic organizers for students to organize their thoughts as well as capture information from articles read. The task plans for multiple drafts of the essay to be generated before submission of a final essay. Similarly, another ELA task requires students to write an opinion piece about competitive sports. Research on the topic would be conducted via articles and multimedia. The plan includes the use of a graphic organizer to gather information and quotes for citation. Multiple drafts aligned to this task were submitted, demonstrating rigorous habits and access for diverse learners.

- Tasks also simulate real world applicability in order for students to make meaning. A science task asks students to create a foldable that will inform readers about the stages of the water cycle. The interdisciplinary task required students to illustrate and label the various stages of the water cycle and use the restate, answer, cite, and explain (RACE) strategy for their written passages. In an ELA book club task, students must complete a character power graphic organizer that demonstrates their understanding of the power dynamic among characters in their self-selected texts. Categories on the organizer included character traits, power, and voice. Likewise, a mathematics performance task required students to justify whether a tile company demonstrated inconsistencies in packages of colored tiles. Using a graphic organizer, students must calculate the fractions, decimals, and percentages of colored tiles to discern if the claim about tiles sizes is correct. In this task, students are also required to write a narrative either justifying or refuting the company’s claims.
Additional Finding

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

Common assessments such as iReady are used to determine student progress towards goals across subject areas. Teachers use the Teachers College Reading and Writing Program (TCRWP) reading and writing assessments and a four-point math rubric that align to the school’s curricula.

Impact

Common assessments are used to inform small group instruction, identify students for Response to Intervention (RTI) services, make adjustments to instructional time, and revise pacing calendars. Feedback to students is actionable and provides next steps.

Supporting Evidence

- Teachers administer common assessments in ELA and mathematics three times a year. The results gleaned from these assessments are used to formulate tiered RTI student support. In mathematics, support includes targeted small group instruction in the classroom, increasing periods of math instruction to eleven periods weekly, pull out lessons, afterschool tutoring, and a Saturday academy. Grade specific skills are targeted based on tiered performance levels. Additionally, based on performance data, teachers revised mathematics pacing calendars in order to cover power standards in preparation for New York State math exams. RTI support includes small group conferencing with strategy lessons, increased ELA instruction to twelve periods weekly, pull out lessons, afterschool tutoring, and a Saturday academy. As a result of these interventions, students receiving RTI math supports are approaching RTI Level 2, 2.5, or exceeding 2.5. Students who receive RTI support for ELA are currently on or exceeding a Level 2.5.

- School-developed fall and winter diagnostics were administered to students in ELA and math. Data from the assessments was used to inform student groupings in class, modify pacing calendars, form an RTI plan and develop RTI groups. Comparison data from the assessments showed a one percent gain in students reading at or above grade level and a reduction of students reading two or more levels below. In mathematics, there was an eight percent gain in students performing at or above grade level and a reduction of students performing two levels or below.

- Teachers provide actionable feedback on tasks that commends and provides next steps for student improvement. For instance, on a science task that required students to demonstrate their understanding of the particle theory by producing a model, the teacher commended a student for accurately depicting how a particle behaves when heat is applied. A next step for the student was to cite specific examples of evidence when writing in science. In a writing task, students wrote an opinion piece about the pulling down of controversial statues. A student was commended for including details to support an opinion of the events but was cited for punctuation and grammar errors. During the student meeting, the students stated that they understood the feedback provided and used it to improve their work.
Findings
School leaders and content specific coaches provide feedback to teachers that includes strengths, challenges, and next steps. Teacher performance data from Advance is used to plan differentiated professional development.

Impact
Feedback to teachers about instructional practices and targeted professional development promote teacher professional growth.

Supporting Evidence

- School leaders and instructional coaches provide feedback to teachers that is connected to the instructional focus of making thinking visible in class discussions and in student writing. A review of observation reports showed teachers being commended for engaging lessons that foster student-to-student discourse or participation in hands-on activities. Trends in the recommendations were rooted in the need for student self-assessment using a rubric or checklist to inform students of the success criteria for assigned tasks. Next steps also include the use of formative assessment strategies, such as stop and jot strategies that align to the instructional focus of making student thinking visible. In response to feedback, teachers’ observation data shows improvement in eight components of the Danielson Framework for Teaching.

- During the teacher meetings, teachers expressed that they receive feedback to improve their craft from administrators and content specific coaches. Feedback is initially shared verbally on the same day of the observation and subsequently memorialized in a written format. A teacher stated that because of the feedback received from an administrator, their Measure of Teacher Practice (MOTP) score is consistently increasing. Another teacher mentioned that support from an instructional coach is helping to fine tune focus standards in preparation for the New York State ELA, math and science exams, as well as, enhance the pacing of the science curriculum.

- Data from Advance is used to plan differentiated professional development that is aligned to the instructional focus of making thinking visible. Administrators and subject specific coaches deliver content specific professional learning. Sessions include working with ELA teachers on curriculum and unit mapping, planning for small group instruction, and integrating on-demand writing prompts to assess writing. Math teachers conducted data dives to differentiate instruction, and science teachers were informed about using an inquiry approach to instruction. Lastly, social studies teachers worked collaboratively on an onsite exhibit entitled, “Art: Telling Stories from the Past” that will be added to the school’s current museum exhibit. This exhibit on American History, and Native Americans, was curated by the students and will be available for viewing by the school community.
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 engage in inquiry-based professional collaborations and analyze student work using the ATLAS protocol.

**Impact**

The professional collaborations and analysis of student work have resulted in strengthened teacher capacity, improved teacher practice, and greater progress towards student achievement.

**Supporting Evidence**

- An ELA teacher team was observed conducting an inquiry meeting utilizing the ATLAS protocol to analyze student writing samples for evidence of elaboration and craft. Teachers shared that the information collected would be used to adjust the pacing of the historical fiction and narrative writing units. During this meeting, teachers captured low inference notes on student work products. For writing, these included organization issues, the minimal usage of dialogue, lack of character development, and some attempts at using descriptive language. Student work overall showed an improvement in developing the setting. Implications for classroom practice included using modeling to teach students the relationship between setting and characters and how to include more dialogue in their writing. The presenting teacher learned that the students need to work on setting and dialogue and planned to reteach a lesson on organization before moving on to elaboration and craft. Teachers recounted that the impact of teacher teamwork informs them of the areas in the curriculum that need to be reinforced, allows them to share scaffolding tools for students with disabilities, and helps to inform their assembling of targeted groups of students. As an outgrowth of teacher teamwork, students are now writing larger volumes of work.

- A review of ELA teacher team notes revealed that teachers meet four times a week to analyze student writing samples and lesson plans and create customized checklists for specific projects. Teacher observations of the student writing samples highlighted students’ use of imagery, elaboration, and craft in their writing, as well as, a lack of transitions. Data also revealed that students needed support in establishing a setting. Teachers employed strategies such as re-teaching and providing exemplar models for students. The ELA department used their teacher meeting time to create a poetry book project, and checklists written in English Language Learners’ native language of Spanish.

- A review of math team notes showed teachers meeting weekly to analyze student work using the ATLAS protocol. Trends found in student work included students’ making errors while using integers and students demonstrating difficulty in differentiating between an expression and an equation. As a result of looking at student work, teachers included graphic organizers to allow students to explain their work, which connected to a school goal of making thinking visible. Furthermore, additional instructional classes were incorporated into the school program, and pacing calendars were revised with topics aligned to Common Core Learning Standards. Across teams, teacher observation reports showed overall improvement in the eight components of the Danielson Framework for Teaching, starting with the first observation of the year to the most recent.