Quality Review Report

2017-2018

Leaders of Tomorrow
Junior High-Intermediate-Middle 11X370
3710 Barnes Avenue
Bronx
NY 10467

Principal: Sean Licata

Dates of Review:
May 15, 2018 - May 16, 2018

Lead Reviewer: Lisa Reiter
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

Leaders of Tomorrow 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>
<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>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
## School Culture

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

## Systems for Improvement

<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>1.3 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>
<td>Well Developed</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>
<td>Proficient</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>
<td>Proficient</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>
<td>Well Developed</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>
<td>Well Developed</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
**Area of Celebration**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Quality Indicator:</th>
<th>4.2 Teacher Teams and Leadership Development</th>
<th>Rating:</th>
<th>Well Developed</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>

**Findings**
All teachers engage in inquiry-based collaborations following the *Data Wise* protocol. Distributed leadership structures such as department and grade-team leaders are embedded.

**Impact**
Strengthened teacher practice is resulting in schoolwide instructional coherence and increased student achievement. Teacher leaders play an integral role in key decisions that affect student learning across the school.

**Supporting Evidence**

- All teachers serve on content-based teacher teams that meet regularly to engage in inquiry work. Each team identifies a problem of practice that aligns with the school’s instructional focus to guide their inquiry work. For example, the English team determined students struggled to utilize vocabulary strategies during independent reading, thus hindering their comprehension. The team developed an action plan that included teaching reciprocal reading strategies, which is also a schoolwide initiative. While the entire English department focused on reciprocal reading strategies, each grade identified grade-level specific scaffolds. For example, grade-seven teachers identified summarizing as the skill on which to focus and provided students with checklists and graphic organizers. As a result, there was a 132 percent increase in student comprehension scores from the first administration to the second administration of a reading assessment. Additionally, there was increased instructional coherence as evidenced by the consistent use of reciprocal reading strategies across all classrooms. Inquiry-based professional collaborations positively impact the instructional capacity of teachers and student achievement.

- The math inquiry team was observed engaging in a lesson-plan study. The presenting teacher provided the team with student work samples from a lesson they had observed. The team focused on the effects a student-friendly rubric has on student achievement. Teachers identified that students used the language from the rubric in their written responses explaining what the error was in a math problem. Additionally, it was stated that 86 percent of students successfully completed the task. It was also stated that while students demonstrated improvement in their responses, they struggled to describe why the solution was incorrect. Teachers collaborated on what could be done differently and next steps that could be taken to support student learning. Next steps included providing students time to discuss the problem with peers and providing sentence starters for those students who may need them. All inquiry teams present their findings at a faculty conference, which promotes collaborative learning, schoolwide coherence, and strengthens teachers’ instructional capacity.

- School leaders believe in a facilitative leadership model that ensures teachers play an integral role in key decisions across the school. Department and grade-team leaders lead their respective assignments. For example, the English department lead was empowered to build culturally-relevant in-classroom libraries that met students’ reading needs. The department leader reviewed schoolwide reading levels and interest surveys to create the book order. As a result of this, students’ independent reading levels have increased as measured by the Degrees of Reading Power (DRP) assessment. Additionally, the social studies department lead, in collaboration with her team, determined the Notice and Note strategy would support students better in their content area than reciprocal reading. Teacher leaders, including peer collaborative and model teachers, also facilitate professional development (PD), engage in intervisitations, and provide feedback to other teachers, thus strengthening the instructional capacity of teachers.
Findings

Across classrooms, teaching practices are aligned to the curricula and reflect an articulated set of beliefs that students learn best when they are provided with scaffolds, engage in productive struggle, and have opportunities for discussion. While teaching practices consistently provide multiple entry points into the curricula, high-quality supports and extensions vary across classrooms.

Impact

Shared beliefs shape practices across most classrooms leading to meaningful student work products, though in some cases there are missed opportunities for students to engage in student to student discussions to deepen their thinking or for supports that keep all learners engaged and challenged.

Supporting Evidence

- The articulated set of beliefs on how students learn best includes developing student-centered learning activities that all students can access and providing students with higher-order thinking questions that lead to student discussions. This belief was evident across classrooms and lead to meaningful student work products. For example, in a grade-eight math class, students were tasked with identifying which function table did not belong. This task allowed for multiple correct responses as long as students could defend their choice. Students worked collaboratively to analyze each table by identifying the y-intercept and rate of change. One student shared that two of the tables had the same slope. Another student said, “I agree. They have the same equation.” The teacher challenged the group to prove their answer. In a grade-seven ELA class, students engaged in a Socratic seminar on the novel, *A Raisin in the Sun*, and supplemental articles. The discussion centered on racial discrimination. One student said, “The article stated that whites were offered housing units when people of color were told none were available.” Another student added, “I agreed because it states that the bank would only see black clients with appointments but white people could just walk in.” Each discussion round lasted approximately five-to-seven minutes. At the end of each round, students seated in the outer circle coached their peers.

- While teaching practices were aligned to the articulated beliefs, in some classrooms there were missed opportunities to deepen student discussions or the pacing of the lesson allowed for students to disengage. In a grade-eight social studies classroom, students were analyzing German propaganda posters from World War II. Students were required to complete a graphic organizer. Some groups engaged in a discussion as they finished the graphic organizer. For example, one student shared with her group that the way the woman was looking up to Hitler gave the impression that she admired him. However, some groups worked independently or did not understand the complexities of their assigned poster, thus limiting their discussions.

- Across classrooms, students had access to various supports such as wall charts, reference sheets, and teacher support. For example, in a grade-eight ELA classroom, all students received a graphic organizer that included prompts to help students use background information and textual evidence to make inferences. However, an extension for top performers was not present. In a grade-six class for students with disabilities, students engaged in a Socratic seminar with student-created questions. Students received one of two graphic organizers that were used to help develop higher-order thinking questions for the discussion. Additionally, throughout classrooms, teachers provided one-on-one conferences for students as additional support. While in most classes there was evidence of tiered tasks, strategic extensions were not yet evident.
Additional Finding

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

School leaders and faculty ensure that curricula are aligned to the Common Core Learning Standards and the instructional shifts such as academic vocabulary and deeper understanding. Curricular and academic tasks are planned and refined using student work and data.

Impact

Decisions about curricula build coherence and promote college and career readiness for all students. Faculty members ensure a diversity of learners, including English Language Learners (ELLs) and students with disabilities, have access to the curricula and tasks are cognitively engaging.

Supporting Evidence

- Curricular documents across grades and content areas evidence consistent alignment with the Common Core Learning Standards and the integration of the math instructional shifts. For example, a grade-seven unit plan includes a task in which students determine whether a card will be higher or lower than the last one turned over. Students are required to explain their responses which demonstrates a deeper understanding of probability and statics. A grade-six unit plan includes a task in which students graph different shapes using ordered pairs and then solve real-world problems. Additionally, a grade-eight math lesson plan includes prompts for discussion that require students to prove their answers are correct using a different strategy.

- Review of curricular documents reveals the integration of the English Language Arts instructional shifts. A grade-six lesson plan includes a task that requires students to cite textual evidence during a discussion on the pros and cons of video games for children. A grade-seven lesson plan includes literary and informational texts that students will use to engage in a Socratic seminar. A grade-six science unit plan includes a task in which students will write an informational lab report on the role of the barn owl in the ecosystem. Students will include information from the text, as well as their findings from an investigation. Additionally, there is evidence of academic vocabulary included in curricular documents. Therefore, across grades and content areas, there is evidence of the instructional shifts.

- Teachers use assessment results such as DRP and iReady scores and exit tickets to create student groups and identify supports to ensure access for all students. Teachers develop unit plans and tasks collaboratively using data from assessments. For example, the science department identified leveled news articles for students based on their reading levels. Additionally, included in a grade-six lesson plan for a class that includes students with disabilities, students are grouped based on their reading level and data from the previous class. While all students are receiving the same text, each group receives different supports such as a graphic organizer or adult support. A grade-seven lesson plan includes a graphic organizer and check-list as supports for students. Additionally, unit plans across grades and content areas include scaffolds for ELLs such as Google translate, vocabulary support, and reference sheets. It is evident that all students have access to cognitively engaging tasks.
Additional Finding

Quality Indicator: 2.2 Assessment
Rating: Proficient

Findings
Across classrooms, teachers use rubrics that are aligned with the curricula. Teachers’ assessment practices such as conferencing, exit slip analyses, and whole-group questioning, consistently reflect ongoing checks for understanding and self-assessment.

Impact
Teachers provide students with actionable feedback that includes next steps. Additionally, teachers make effective adjustments to instruction to ensure all students’ needs are being met.

Supporting Evidence

- Teachers use rubrics to assess student work and provide actionable, written feedback to students on tasks such as essays and math performance tasks. Across classrooms, samples of student work products showed teacher-written actionable feedback. Feedback to students on math tasks guides students to solve problems using another strategy, check their work to ensure accuracy, and to justify their answers. One grade-eight student received a glow that she used algebra to solve the system of equations. The next step was, “Prove that your answer is correct using the substitution method.” Other examples of written feedback to students include, “Use specific evidence from the lab in your analysis questions,” “Include direct quotes to support your argument,” and “Remember to cite evidence from both texts and add transition words.” Additionally, evidence of the use of rubrics by teachers and students across grades was evident on hallway bulletin boards, classroom displays, and in student work portfolios.

- One student reported, and all present agreed, that the feedback given by their teachers has a direct impact on their work. A grade-eight student stated, “The feedback I received was to use relevant details to support my answer.” The student shared that this feedback has helped her be less vague in her writing and better grades. Another student stated, “Feedback and rubrics help me know what I need to improve on and what I am good at.” Students also shared that they are expected to implement their feedback on the next task. Therefore, students receive actionable feedback across grades and content areas that positively impact student performance.

- Teachers continually check for understanding through exit tickets, past assignments, conferencing, and whole-group questioning and make adjustments according to those assessments. For example, during a grade-seven ELA class, the teacher shared that based on their last Socratic seminar, she noticed that students in the outer circle were not identifying the strongest responses or questions their partners asked. She reminded students that this is an important part of being a coach. In a grade-six ELA classroom, the teacher reminded students that they need to cite textual evidence to support their argument. Also, in a grade-eight science classroom, the teacher asked whole-group questions to assess students’ understanding of the water cycle before beginning a lab. Teachers also conference with students and make adjustments for individual or small groups of students. For example, in a grade-eight math class the teacher provided one group of students an additional reference sheet when they struggled to begin the task. She guided another group by suggesting they begin with an easier problem and work their way up to the more complex problems. She also reminded the whole class that they needed to use mathematical language in their written explanations. Additionally, across classrooms, there were self- and peer-assessment checklists students used as tools to support their learning needs.
Additional Finding

Quality Indicator: 3.4 High Expectations
Rating: Proficient

Findings
School leaders consistently convey high expectations to staff through ongoing feedback aligned to the Danielson Framework for Teaching and weekly memos. School leaders and staff provide ongoing information to families regarding student progress toward college and career readiness.

Impact
Ongoing communication and support by school leaders ensure teachers’ understanding and awareness of expectations regarding teaching and learning. Communication from school leaders and teachers through an online grade book system and other strategies provide frequent opportunities for families to understand progress towards meeting standards.

Supporting Evidence

- School leaders conduct frequent classroom observations and provide feedback utilizing the Danielson Framework for Teaching as the standard for professionalism, quality instruction, and high expectations. Teachers receive a faculty handbook covering a wide variety of expectations ranging from day-to-day professional conduct as well as guidelines for instructional planning. One section of the handbook titled "Developing a Culture of Collegiality," includes expectations for conducting intervisitations to support effective planning, provide feedback, and support colleagues. Other sections in the handbook include topics such as effective classroom practices, classroom management, and lesson and unit planning. For example, lessons should consist of strategies that allow students multiple opportunities for independent and guided practice through individual, partnerships, and small group tasks. One teacher stated, and all present agreed, that school leaders communicate clear expectations. The teacher added that they receive support, such as PD and intervisitations, to meet those expectations.

- Weekly memos reinforce high expectations and include professional literature resources and supports for staff. Memos also include leadership quotes and shout-outs to staff and students. For example, one memo includes a restorative practice of the week that focuses on building trust between students and adults and resources on effective teaching and learning. Other memos include professional book recommendations that connect to schoolwide initiatives, PD opportunities, and reminders about upcoming due dates. In a newsletter from January, teachers are informed of the lesson plan clinic for the upcoming week. Teachers are expected to bring lesson plans and additional materials to the session. Additionally, school leaders will visit teachers’ classrooms to observe the lessons developed during the PD. Therefore, teachers receive support and are held accountable for meeting expectations.

- School leaders and staff consistently communicate expectations for students’ college and career readiness with families. Parents came to a quick consensus that the online grade book and progress reports provide them with helpful information regarding how their children are performing. Additionally, the school holds student-led conferences that allow students to share their progress with their families. One parent stated, and all present agreed, that she often receives phone calls about positive progress her child has made, as well as areas he needs to improve. Also, parent workshops are held on a variety of topics such as understanding individual education plans and advocating for students with disabilities and cyber safety. Thus, families receive ongoing information that helps them understand student progress.
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 teacher development with frequent classroom observation cycles and analysis of student work. Prompt written feedback captures teachers’ strengths, challenge, and next steps using the Danielson *Framework for Teaching*.

**Impact**

Evaluative and non-evaluative classroom observations result in verbal and written feedback for teachers that makes clear the expectations for teacher practice and the supports available to meet goals and elevate practice.

**Supporting Evidence**

- School leaders conduct frequent classroom observations and provide feedback utilizing the Danielson *Framework for Teaching*. Each rated item is supported with specific, detailed evidence from the observed class to support the ratings. Next steps are included at the close of the observation reports. School leaders include the analysis of student work in feedback discussions and observation reports. For example, in an observation report, next steps include developing scaffolds so that all students can complete the task. Also, school leaders shared a strategy of observation cycle planning that targets teachers based on individual need. For example, a teacher who may need additional support will receive an observation from each school leader, not only the administrator assigned to his department. Additionally, the principal believes that school leaders should conduct grade and department observations to support coherence throughout the school. As a result of frequent cycles of observations and effective feedback there is an increase in the percentage of teachers receiving an effective rating in domain three of the Danielson *Framework for Teaching*. Therefore, it is evident that observations and effective feedback elevate schoolwide instructional practices and promote professional growth.

- Observation reports contain feedback that captures the strengths, challenges, and next steps teachers should take to improve their practice and impact student success. For example, one report details how the teacher used assessments in the lesson to regroup students. Feedback offered to this teacher includes creating opportunities for students to peer assess and provide each other feedback. In another report, the teacher is commended for his growth in managing student behavior. Next steps include incorporating a strategy to recognize students that are demonstrating the desired behavior. The report also includes a three-step classroom management approach and an example of the strategy. Additionally, a review of observation reports reveals that teachers who receive highly-effective ratings are encouraged to support teachers who may need additional support implementing specific strategies, such as a Socratic seminar. Therefore, feedback provided to teachers articulates clear expectations and supports teacher development.

- In addition to reports resulting from evaluative classroom observations, school leaders and teacher leaders visit classrooms and provide feedback. For example, teacher leaders conducted environmental walkthroughs and emailed feedback in the form of glows and grows. Teachers came to a quick consensus on the usefulness of feedback from non-evaluative observations to improve their practices. One teacher shared that she received feedback to incorporate more checks for understanding through student self-assessment. The teacher shared that this strategy was effective and that she continues to use it in her classroom.