Quality Review Report

2017-2018

Bronx Little School
Elementary 12X691
1827 Archer Street
Bronx
NY 10460

Principal: Beverly Urquiza

Dates of Review:
January 3, 2018 and January 5, 2018

Lead Reviewer: Phyllis Siwiec
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

Bronx Little School serves students in grade PK through grade 5. 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>
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<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>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>Additional Finding</td>
<td>Proficient</td>
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<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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### School Culture

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Area</th>
<th>Rating</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1.4 Maintain a culture of mutual trust and positive attitudes that supports the academic and personal growth of students and adults</td>
<td>Additional Finding</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3.4 Establish a culture for learning that communicates high expectations to staff, students and families, and provide supports to achieve those expectations</td>
<td>Additional Finding</td>
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### Systems for Improvement

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

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

School leaders and faculty ensure that curricula are aligned to the Common Core Learning Standards and strategically integrate the instructional shifts, including balancing fiction and non-fiction texts read by students and having more conversations in math where students explain their reasoning and understanding. Curricula and academic tasks are planned and refined using student work and data.

Impact

Purposeful decisions regarding curricula result in coherence that promotes college and career readiness for all students. A diversity of learners have access to the curricula and are cognitively engaged.

Supporting Evidence

- Common Core alignment and coherence in curricula appear in unit designs across the grades in English Language Arts (ELA), math, social studies and science, from kindergarten through grade five. Examples illustrate that there is much emphasis on skills to promote college and career readiness for all students. A series of visuals of matrices show the thinking of the teachers in planning the reading and writing layout of units of study for each grade based on the Common Core. These visuals articulate the expectations for a skill or attribute at each grade level, including comprehension, vocabulary development, collaboration, goal-setting, and stamina-building. The spiraling of skills and competencies evolves as the student grows and becomes better able to build on the foundation developed in the earlier grades. Both school leaders and teachers shared that these skills become the foundation of those needed for success in career and college in later years. The strategic integration of the instructional shifts in planning a balance of non-fiction and fiction texts is apparent in the kindergarten through grade five continuum.

- In the math curriculum from the school’s Vertical Alignment retreat, school leaders and teachers defined coherence in math as students’ needing to understand certain topics in order to grasp fully other concepts within the grade or in the next grade. Further integration of Common Core shifts included real world application, rigor, and math discussions and explanations of strategies used, as stated in a planning document used by school leadership, faculty, and the math consultant. The curriculum is also aligned with differentiated math exemplars focused on problem-solving, with word problem tasks at four levels, novice, apprentice, practitioner, and expert, based on a student’s grade level, with differenting criteria in the scoring rubric.

- Examined samples of math curricula illustrate adjustments made over time using student work and data. For example, the rigor of pre and post-assessments in curriculum maps increased from 2016-17 to 2017-18 to more closely align with grade level material and standards. These adjustments were based on a close analysis of the grades three through five New York State Assessment from spring 2017 and end-of-year math assessments in kindergarten through grade five. Math units demonstrate differentiation for English Language Learners (ELLs) and students with disabilities, as well as high and low achievers, in lessons that feature three levels of experience and corresponding activities. These include a support level for those who need more assistance, an on-grade level for those who have reached grade level expectations, and an enrich level for higher achievers who need extensions in their instruction. In addition, the unit plans list materials that show personalization for individual students, including a customizable adaptive interactive math online program, an at-home accessible math interactive individualized program, and a math benchmark series that offers grade-level assessments in word problem solving with multiple entry points. All align to the Common Core with “I can” statements that clarify expectations and outcomes in student-friendly language. For instance, in a grade four unit on multiplication, these would include the following: I can multiply tens, hundreds, and thousands by whole numbers through ten, or I can use the “draw a diagram strategy” to solve multistep problems.
Area of Focus

| Quality Indicator: | 3.1 Goals and Action Plans | Rating: | Proficient |

Findings

There is a short list of clear and focused school-level goals and action plans apparent in the Comprehensive Educational Plan (CEP) that school leaders track for progress and adjust. School leaders communicate with the school community regarding the school improvement plan and decision-making processes but are not yet effectively involving and communicating with all on the creation of goals.

Impact

School goals drive efforts to accelerate student learning but are not yet thoughtfully adjusted to leverage changes that explicitly link to accelerated student learning and social-emotional growth. The entire school community is not yet involved and integral to the process of creating and tracking the short list of clear goals.

Supporting Evidence

- A short list of school level goals focuses on progress to drive efforts to accelerate student learning and foster social-emotional growth. There are action plans describing next steps in monitoring goals and indicating dates of review. For example, Goal 1 focuses on classroom teachers collaboratively developing Common Core standards aligned to writing units and performance tasks. School administration and the School Leadership Team monitor the progress of this goal in a number of ways, including reviewing checkpoints with instructional consultants, modifications in unit planners to meet students’ needs, curricular documents that demonstrate adjustments and modifications, and data collected from a schoolwide Academic Intervention Service (AIS) program every six weeks. Each of the school’s goals has a series of action plans that include mechanisms, events, or processes that result in an impact on student learning and family engagement. Methods to monitor the action plan vary and lack central structures or systems to collect and analyze data and results over time.

- Three of the five school goals focus on accelerating student learning in the areas of writing, comprehension skills for English as a New Language (ENL) students, and student engagement. The other two have a social-emotional focus: increasing school attendance and increasing parent participation in schoolwide events. In order to provide support for the development of these goals, the school contracted with a comprehensive writing program that includes materials, a professional development consultant, and new templates and assessment data tracking to measure the impact of the program on individual students, groups, grade levels, and the entire school. To support the ENL goal, two additional English as a Second Language teachers were hired, one for the kindergarten through grade two and the other serving students in grades three through five.

- School leaders involve and communicate with all stakeholder groups in the school community regarding improvement plans and decision-making protocols. The School Leadership Team (SLT) meets monthly and discusses the school’s goals and progress to date. Teachers, parents, and school leaders make up the SLT membership and are integral in developing the goals and monitoring their progress, as shared in their agendas. Some of these stakeholders are familiar with the short list of goals set for June 2018 and the progress towards reaching them. However, not all could speak about the goals, describe the methods of measuring them, or indicate the status of progress towards meeting them.
Findings

Across classrooms, teaching practices are aligned to the curricula, with the workshop model reflecting an articulated set of beliefs about how students learn best as they build their independence through tiered instruction. Teaching strategies consistently provide multiple entry points into the curricula.

Impact

All learners, including ELLs and students with disabilities, are engaged in appropriately challenging tasks and demonstrate higher-order thinking skills in meaningful student work products.

Supporting Evidence

- The workshop model as demonstrated here includes increasing levels of independence and student discussions, encouraging risk-taking and a sharing of ideas along with components that include mini-lessons, guided practice, and independent work. The learning objective in an observed Integrated Co-Teaching (ICT) grade five class was “I can develop ideas about characters by tracking their dialogue, actions, and feelings.” During the lesson, the teacher modeled a “think aloud” approach to make her thinking visible while reading a sample text. She gave examples periodically of dialogue, actions, and feelings of the main character that the students tracked as she shared her thinking. This was whole group active engagement. There were two different turn and talks, with questions to discuss. During the independent practice time, students were to read their book club books, select a character, and record the character’s dialogue, actions, and feelings. The teacher differentiated the recording format with an optional graphic organizer for students who were reading below grade level and with an extension for those who finished their independent task early. A practice observed across all classrooms was a midpoint check-in that occurred halfway through the independent work time. The teacher signaled to the class to stop their work and discuss with their table groups or partners the information that they had gathered. For students who still needed more support after this check-in, the teacher gathered them to see what additional support was needed.

- Observed instruction consistently provided multiple entry points so that all students, including ELLs and students with disabilities, were engaged in appropriately challenging tasks that used differentiated graphic organizers, levels of texts, and other supports. As observed, the English as a New Language (ENL) teacher worked in a general education kindergarten classroom with another teacher demonstrating multiple entry points for ELLs in a writing lesson. The ENL teacher worked with six identified ELL students at a table where she provided specific materials for them, including whiteboards, markers, post-its, and letter charts. The differing levels had specific tasks. The intermediate group worked with a teacher to create one shared narrative piece, the emergent students worked with partners to tell their stories across three pages, sketch, and add words, and the advanced group worked with partners to tell their stories across three to four pages and then sketch, add words, use checklists, and add expressive language to their narratives.

- To offer more targeted support in ELA, school leadership implemented a schoolwide Academic Intervention Support (AIS) period. Students meet in small, homogeneous groups for support. In grades kindergarten through grade two, students have five days a week of a research-based phonics program. In grades three through five, there are a variety of supports, including leveled book intervention, guided reading, strategy groups, phonics, and book clubs. During this time, all teachers push into classes to provide support, including the physical education teacher, related service providers, and out of class support staff. Several observed small groups had clear focus and engagement. This customized support provided a personal approach between the students and the instructor that was positive and caring while being strategic and responsive to each student’s needs.
Findings
Across classrooms, teachers use and create assessments, rubrics, and grading policies that are aligned with the school’s curricula while using common assessments to determine student progress toward goals across grades and subject areas.

Impact
Teachers provide actionable feedback to students regarding student achievement, and assessment results are used to adjust curricula and instruction.

Supporting Evidence

- Actionable feedback is given to students through “glows” and “grows,” with the added step of articulating next steps with, “How can I do this?” At this point, depending on the grade level of the student, the student or teacher will fill out what the student needs to do to show understanding, incorporating suggestions from the teacher for improvement or correction. In grade five writing, one student received this feedback: “Great working on engaging your readers in your introduction by making a personal connection. Next Time: To elaborate the body of your paragraphs, you can do this by explaining how each quote connects to the theme.” Other written feedback referenced using the grade six section of the rubric to use figurative language to develop descriptions of characters or to try to write a “lingering thought about your theme in the conclusion." In a math assignment, the teacher wrote, “I noticed that you used the quick draw strategy to add your items. Next time: In your writing explain how the strategy helped you add.” Students reported that they appreciated feedback and guidance about what they needed to do to improve. They also stated that they understood the use of rubrics, but that the added step of conferring with the teacher could then “break it to you nicely” about what needed to be done next.

- School Leadership developed several tools to help teachers capture assessment data in a useful and functional method. The “Class Snapshot” is a database about the students in each class, primarily referencing ELA and math, including baselines in reading and in differing writing genres (narrative, informational, argumentative, etc.), math end of unit assessments, and data from intervention programs, as well as listing any services each child receives and whether they are ELLs or have an Individualized Education Plan (IEP). The recorded data, analyzed periodically, inform teachers and grade level teams about student progress and necessary adjustments. Teachers use multiple common assessments, such as ELA and math beginning of year (BoY), middle of year (MoY), and end of year (EoY) schoolwide assessments. All are used to adjust instruction and curricular modifications. For instance, instead administering pretests before the unit began, teachers moved them halfway through the unit to serve as a mid-point check-in with students to see how well they are progressing with their understanding of the content and whether any adjustments are needed.

- An Assessment Analysis Protocol (AAP) that the principal created is a data analysis tool that school leadership and teachers find beneficial. At grade level team meetings, student work is normed to create a coherent understanding of grade level expectations and then analyzed using the AAP. This tool helps teachers determine the percent of students who are proficient, the strengths and needs of each class, including subgroups, and individual students who need extra scaffolding or opportunities for enrichment. The AAP is used as a guiding force to modify units and drive instructional outcomes and activities for lesson plans.
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 consistently communicate high expectations to the entire staff. Teacher teams and staff establish a culture for learning that consistently communicates high expectations to all students through the “Leader in Me” initiative.

Impact

School leaders provide training in academic and social-emotional learning expectations and have a system of accountability for those expectations. Moreover, teacher teams and staff offer ongoing and detailed feedback and guidance/advisement supports that prepare students for their future options.

Supporting Evidence

- School leadership developed clear descriptions and expectations for all staff with a document entitled *Instructional Expectations for BLS (Bronx Little School) in Grades K-2 and Grades 3-5*. This document clearly describes the workshop structure and balanced literacy components. In addition, schedules for the daily 120 minute literacy block are mapped out, including reading workshop with time allotted for an interactive read aloud, shared reading, guided reading, mini-lessons, and whole class shares at the end of each workshop. Components for writing workshop include independent and partner writing and strategy lessons as well as mini-lessons and shares. For math instruction, expectations include components in distinct structures. Math workshop features introduction to concepts, launch of the problem, work time either independently or with partners, group share, and reflection revisiting of the concept. The components for ELA and math were both evident in lesson planning for reading, writing, and math lessons. Classroom visitations and discussions with teachers confirmed that these are agreed-upon features of practices that align with how students learn best.

- School leaders have developed several ways to guide teachers in understanding and implementing the instructional expectations described in the *Expectations* guidebooks for grades K-2 and grades 3-5. A two-day professional development (PD) workshop for all staff to help teachers understand what an individual classroom would need to support expectations for students had teachers tour the school with an ELA and math instructional walkthrough checklist. Teachers used these checklists to notice specific features, such as the organization and presentation of the writing center in each classroom. Teachers compared the details of classroom libraries section of the checklist to what was actually there in classrooms. School leaders then compiled and analyzed the results of the walkthroughs to help develop a PD follow-up activity to address deficit areas. Because of this focused guidance with support, 93 percent of teachers agreed or strongly agreed that the principal/school leader at their school sets clear expectations for teachers about implementing what they have learned in professional development.

- The student leadership development program has defined expectations in seven areas of personal, social, and academic behavior. School leaders have introduced the program across the school with teachers and students, focusing on individual traits and their impact on students, classes, and school culture. Students reported that the guidance provided is very helpful in developing friendships, work habits, and problem solving. In addition, 97 percent of teachers agreed or strongly agreed that their school has well-defined learning expectations for all students.
Findings
The majority of teachers are engaged in structured, inquiry-based professional collaborations through grade level teams that meet weekly. Distributed management structures are in place that foster teacher leadership development.

Impact
Teacher collaborations promote the achievement of school goals and the implementation of Common Core standards, strengthening the instructional capacity of teachers. Structures for teacher leadership development have built leadership capacity and support teachers' having a voice in key decisions that affect student learning across the school.

Supporting Evidence

- The majority of teachers are engaged in weekly collaborations as Inquiry Teams that focus on attainment of school goals by strengthening the instructional capacity of teachers. This was evidenced by changes in teachers’ Advance Status from the previous report to the latest one. As student engagement through questioning is a focus, teachers that were observed showed an increase in ratings of one level in their observations in area 3b of the Danielson Framework (Using Questioning and Discussion Techniques), as noted by school leaders.

- After sharing student work products, the grade two inquiry team chose as areas of focus retelling in order, identifying a problem and its solution, and determining importance in fiction and non-fiction stories, with the intended outcome for students “to be able to effectively retell with determining the important parts of a fiction or non-fiction text.” Each teacher selected specific students who were struggling and showing limited progress in these areas. After a discussion, the teachers decided to focus their intervention using small group instruction to provide strategies at students’ reading levels so they could master these related comprehension skills. The inquiry cycle lasted six weeks using leveled intervention texts to teach in small groups. The students had weekly assessments using a retelling rubric, which had four levels of achievement. After three weeks of small group intervention with the inquiry team meeting weekly, in one class, all students gained at least a full point on the rubric. The other class scored increases ranging from .5 to 1.0 on the rubric.

- A number of teacher teams provide opportunities for teachers to develop leadership skills, sharing the responsibilities of developing the capacity of teams while participating in the growth and advancement of the school. This includes teams such as the Instructional Cabinet/Professional Development Team, the School Improvement Team, the Lighthouse Team Consultation Committee, the School Leadership Team, the Hiring Committee, the grade level teams, and PLCs. Distributive leadership structures offer teachers a voice in key decision-making. As a result, four teachers have newly designed responsibilities that add to the capacity of the school and student learning. All four began as classroom teachers with these roles designed to specifically fit their skills. One was trained by the New Teacher Center and is in her third year as a mentor who works with new teachers in their first through third years in the school. Another is now the teacher in a model classroom, which is open multiple times per week for teachers to visit her class and observe her practices. She also visits these teachers to see their implementation of those next steps. The other two have more administrative roles, one as an Individual Education Plan (IEP) teacher to both work with targeted students and to ensure compliance issues are met. The last teacher is now the English as a New Language (ENL) teacher who services designated students, schedules programming, and oversees the after school and Saturday programs for these identified students.