Quality Review Report

2018-2019

J.H.S. 057 Whitelaw Reid
Junior High-Intermediate-Middle 16K057
125 Stuyvesant Avenue
Brooklyn
NY 11221

Principal: Anthony Lett

Dates of Review:
April 10, 2019 - April 11, 2019

Lead Reviewer: Debra Tasioudis
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

J.H.S. 057 Whitelaw Reid 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](http://schools.nyc.gov/Accountability/tools/report/default.htm).

### School Quality Ratings

#### Instructional Core

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th><em>To what extent does the school...</em></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>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>Developing</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><strong>1.4</strong> 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><strong>3.4</strong> 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>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>1.3</strong> 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>Area of Celebration</td>
<td>Well Developed</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>3.1</strong> 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><strong>4.1</strong> 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>Developing</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>4.2</strong> 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>
<td>Proficient</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>5.1</strong> 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>Proficient</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Findings

The use of budget, coaches, and partnerships and other organizational decisions align well to support the school's instructional goals, the performing arts and college readiness. Structures are in place so teams have substantial and deliberate time to reflect on curricula and student work, and align professional responsibilities with the school's instructional goals.

Impact

Strategic organizational decisions lead to improvements in instruction and engages students in meaningful tasks and interventions.

Supporting Evidence

- Despite a steep decline in funding due to lower enrollment, the commitment to the long-term goal of maintaining an arts focus is evident in the school's budget and partnerships. The budget supports a partnership with a teaching artist who comes to the school to work with students with disabilities and English Language Learners (ELLs) in seventh and eighth grade every week. Another provides afterschool arts enrichment for all students. A grant funds teacher work time and resources to embed the arts in humanities units across grades, evident in interdisciplinary literacy units, including students performing and choreographing scenes from *The Little Mermaid*. Allocated funding supports the purchase of costumes and stage materials for this and dance performances. Monies also fund additional staff who provide art and dance instruction across the school. During the review, students were observed rehearsing for both theater and dance productions, demonstrating challenging tasks such as creating theater, taking risks, directing peers, creating dance, refining movement and technique, and reflecting on their own qualities as dancers thus, meeting expectations of the NYC Blueprints for the Arts, Theater, and Dance.

- Also well aligned to the school's goals, budget allocations improve the curricula and assessments, and provide more students with access to technology, and the State Algebra Regents Exam in partnership with *Algebra for All*. Substantial funding allocated upgraded technology and curricula in grades six through eight to ensure that classrooms across the school have access to new computers, and that students have access to new Common Core and Regents-aligned curricular resources and assessments in math. In literacy, classrooms received new libraries to support differentiated independent reading for all learners and reading interventions for students performing both below and above the grade level, demonstrated in responses to literature shared from intervention groups and written responses to primary sources shared from humanities. Students are also taking new online assessments that align to the Common Core, and provide students with rigorous work similar to the State exams. As one student shared, “My math scores and text anxiety are so much better because I’ve had so much more practice and I know what to expect.” The partnership with *College for All* also creates opportunities for students to visit local universities and Ivy League colleges to deepen their understanding of what life is like at city, state and private colleges, and engage in research in preparation for their own college journey.

- Staff time structures allow teacher teams to meet for a substantial amount of time, focused on improving the curricula and teacher practice, particularly their use of data and instructional strategies. Teachers meet for an hour and a half on both Mondays and Fridays to refine instructional practices for their classes and targeted instruction for intervention groups during What I Need (WIN) periods. Grade teams also meet every week outside of this time and focus on school goals. From these sessions, new math tasks were created with an outside consultant, and resulting student work engages students in annotating word problems, explaining in writing what the problem asks and their own work, in their own words, evidence of meaningful student work products and challenging academic tasks.
Area of Focus

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

Findings

Teaching practices across most classrooms do not yet regularly reflect the articulated belief that students learn best with the workshop model that has a short mini lesson and small-group work time. Teaching strategies do not yet consistently scaffold and support entry into tasks and discussions.

Impact

Work products and growing student discussion techniques such as turn and talk and partnered discussions inconsistently reflect high levels of student thinking and participation.

Supporting Evidence

- Although the school leader and teachers articulated the belief that students learn best with the workshop model that includes short, explicit instruction, and opportunities for students to practice new skills in small groups or pairs, teaching practices across the school are not yet aligned. In a math class, students received some explicit instruction in finding the median in a box plot, but then remained seated in rows, working independently. Though the lesson plan included time for students to turn and talk with a partner about their work, only two students in the class discussed their work. Others worked independently or sat waiting as they finished their work. Similarly, in an English Language Arts (ELA) class, the teacher modeled an annotation strategy at the beginning of a lesson, but the print of the text was very small and it was unclear if students were able to read it, or were following along with the teacher, as there was no engagement with the students. Though students were directed to work in small groups or partners, most students were seated in rows and teacher direction did not allow students to talk with one another.

- In meetings with the school leaders and teachers, both groups shared that student engagement and building teacher understanding of the different phases of a lesson, such as modeling and small-group time are still growing in the school. Aligned with this, in a science lesson, the teacher began with a “do now” question about the properties of matter before sending students off to work in pairs to research elements of the periodic table. Most students were unable to list the properties of matter during the activity. The teacher provided the properties of matter and pointed students to some anchor charts to help them understand elements, but fifteen minutes into the lesson, some students were still unaware of what to do or how to start, while others set off to work independently, rather than together, leading to uneven levels of student thinking and participation.

- In an ELA class, students were tasked with analyzing primary sources to make inferences about the role of women in American society in the 1950s. The teacher modeled a strategy for annotating a primary source, and students had a graphic organizer to help them to pull out quotes and support their claims. Student-created claims were also written on yellow paper, making it easy for teacher and student to distinguish them from other notes. Students worked at their own pace, and talked with one another at their tables about their claims and evidence. This level of explicit instruction, scaffolding and demonstration of higher-order thinking in student work products, and high-level student discussion is not yet common in classrooms across the school.
**Findings**

School leaders and staff ensure that curricula align to the Common Core, with focus text-based answers, writing from sources and application in math. Teachers create What I Need (WIN) plans to plan and refine lessons using student work and data.

**Impact**

The curricula are coherent and accessible for a diversity of learners, including students with disabilities and ELLs.

**Supporting Evidence**

- School leaders and teachers ensure that the school’s curriculum maps align to the Common Core standards for ELA, math, and history, and to both the State and the Next Generation Science Standards. A review of the sixth- and eighth-grade curricular overviews for the teacher-created ELA units demonstrates that the units are organized around a theme, such as voices of protest or race and culture in America, with connections to the history standards in the Common Core. The units also include the ELA standards and texts to be read in the unit, and some guiding questions to support teachers in planning for students to respond to informational texts and literature with text-based answers. Similarly, the seventh-grade social studies curricular map aligns to the Common Core, includes some academic vocabulary of focus and performance tasks connected to standards in the units such as citing textual evidence to support the analysis of primary and secondary sources. In math, the units also align to the Common Core, and include additional resources to support the school’s focus on application and independent practice. A sixth-grade unit on number systems and rational numbers includes sections of the schoolwide curricula used, and additional Common Core-aligned practice problems from purchased curricular resources. In science, all grades begin with a "zero unit" on the scientific method, engaging all learners across the school in reflecting on the field of science and its tools and observational techniques, demonstrating a coherence across the grades not yet present in other subject areas.

- Lesson plans shared align to the Common Core and include planning for a diversity of learners, including students with disabilities and ELLs. A social studies lesson plan shared on using primary and secondary sources to understand the Golden Age align to two standards for reading history, and one for writing that asks students to draw evidence from informational texts to support reflection. The lesson also includes planned scaffolds for ELLs such as translated materials and modified texts to align with the reading level of students with disabilities in the class. The lesson plan also includes planning for conferring with two students from different classes. A math lesson plan shared follows a lesson-planning template created by the school leaders and teachers and includes alignment to the Common Core, and students solving real-world problems leading to two linear equations with two variables. The lesson plan includes a graphic organizer to support students, including students with disabilities and ELLs to organize their thinking in defining variables, writing the system of equations, solve showing all steps and stating their solution in sentence form. This planning ensures that the curriculum is accessible for a variety of learners.

- After a review of common assessments, teachers create What I Need (WIN) plans, outlining standards or skills in reading and math in which students need additional time, group students accordingly and align texts and tasks. In an example of a WIN plan created in response to a leveled reading assessment, a six-week teaching plan for a group of students focuses on determining key ideas and details in non-fiction texts that begin at the third-grade level and increase in complexity to the sixth-grade level for students to receive additional practice and guidance. Some assessment analyses also include grouping of students who are demonstrating mastery, but it is not yet clear from the planning documents how the curricula and instruction are adjusted for the highest-achieving students.
Additional Finding

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Quality Indicator:</th>
<th>2.2 Assessment</th>
<th>Rating:</th>
<th>Developing</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>

Findings

Teachers sometimes use rubrics to assess and grade student work; however, students do not always receive actionable next steps. Teachers inconsistently check for understanding and use student self-assessment across classes.

Impact

Teachers and students receive limited feedback regarding student achievement and inconsistently make effective adjustments to meet student learning needs in instruction.

Supporting Evidence

- In a meeting with students, few pieces of student work shared included feedback from the teacher beyond a grade and comments such as, “awesome” or, “good job.” One student shared that although none of the work that she brought to the meeting had feedback from her teacher, her teacher often has conferences with students and gives verbal feedback and next steps for their work. One student in the group received a graded rubric with a writing task and received a “glow” and “grow” to let her know what she did well and what she should continue to work on. The comments read, “Grow: excellent details and strong order [of paragraphs] used. Grow: next time, develop and explain details with specific examples.” Other work samples provided by students were graded with a rubric but offered students no actionable next steps.

- Across classrooms, there was very little, if any, student work posted. Folders of student work were reviewed in some classes; a few contained student work with actionable next steps from teachers, but for most, there was very little feedback from teachers beyond grades or checks or “x” marks to denote that a problem or question was answered incorrectly.

- During instruction, teachers sometimes check for understanding during the mini lesson or during student worktime, usually through questioning, but do not use information gathered to adjust the lesson to meet student learning needs. In a math class, the teacher modeled a problem-solving strategy for students and asked if everyone understood. Students answered yes, but the teacher continued to review the steps several more times when students had correct answers on their papers and did not ask for more review. In a writing lesson, the teacher circulated around the room, reviewing student work and telling students “good job,” or “good work” without any clarity about what the students had done well or what their next steps might be. In another lesson, the teacher asked students to complete an opening activity to see what students remembered from the previous lesson. Many students were unable to complete the task or had only one of the three pieces of requested information. The teacher then reviewed the previous lesson’s learning and students recorded what the teacher shared. The teacher then collected this as evidence of student learning, though this reflected what the teacher wrote on the board, not what students self-reported as their own knowledge.

- In two classes, teachers checked for understanding and made on-the-spot adjustments to meet student-learning needs. In an ELA class, the teacher conferred with students individually and offered guidance and next steps to students as they gathered evidence to write from primary sources. In a math lesson on solving quadratic equations, the teacher stopped the class during independent worktime for a mid-workshop interruption to quickly model factoring trinomials again for students, before sending them back to their work. Several student pairs immediately went back to their work and revised their addition and subtraction steps in their problem solving, demonstrating an effective adjustment to meet student learning needs.


**Additional Finding**

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

**Findings**

School leaders consistently communicate high expectations for improving lesson plans, instruction and the use of data through rehearsals of routines and other professional learning. Advisory, town halls, goal setting, and trips to high schools and colleges fosters a culture of high expectations for students.

**Impact**

There is ongoing professional learning and accountability for high expectations. Students have the support and guidance needed to help them prepare for and select a high school.

**Supporting Evidence**

- The school leader consistently communicates high expectations to teachers and staff for instruction and use of data through daily bulletins, a school and assessment calendar, and ongoing professional learning. The principal conducts daily walkthroughs of classroom instruction, not only to support teacher development through the formal evaluation process, but also to provide training and have a system of accountability for instructional expectations. From the brief classroom visits, the principal develops small professional learning sessions for staff called, “rehearsals” where the principal models an instructional strategy, such as a discussion technique, a check for understanding, or the development of a lesson plan that follows the recommended lesson framework found in the staff handbook. The instructional cabinet, made up of school leaders and teachers also create professional learning sessions for Monday afternoons, from a review of teacher practices observed by the principal and student work and data. The school also has a staff calendar that makes clear expected norms for teams and professionalism, such as giving and seeking honest feedback, being prompt and present and taking ownership of the work. Daily bulletins from the principal also articulate clear expectations for the pacing of lessons, aggressively monitoring for student understanding in the lesson and identifying and addressing gaps in learning identified from classroom assessment. These topics are also found in the agendas of Monday afternoon professional learning records and coaching logs, providing a system of training to support high expectations.

- Coaching support from the Middle School Quality Initiative (MSQI) coach, as well as other off-site literacy coaches articulate expectations for using Webb’s Depth of Knowledge to plan higher-order thinking questions for lessons and class discussions and professional learning to support those expectations in school and grade-wide sessions. There is also professional learning conducted by math coaches from Algebra for All, that guides teachers in the development of tasks that foster application of math skills in real-world problem solving. Coaching and professional learning feedback are shared with the school leaders, creating a system of accountability and support for teachers and staff to meet high expectations.

- Teachers provide students with clear expectations for reading progress and frequently share reading levels with students to support students in setting goals for reading progress. In a meeting with students, all knew their reading levels, and several shared that every other month, their teachers retest their levels, confer with them about their reading progress, and assist them in setting goals and selecting books that challenge them. As one student shared, “My teacher gives me big books to challenge me, helps me set a goal, and I look forward to meeting the goal. I like that I can see where I am and how to improve. It allows you to set your own goals and challenge yourself.”

- School guidance staff and teachers guide students through the high school selection, application and audition process. Beginning in sixth-grade advisory, and throughout middle school, students explore different schools and career trajectories together, and discuss the demands of life at high school, college and a career in the arts or culinary fields.
Additional Finding

| Quality Indicator: | 4.2 Teacher Teams and Leadership Development | Rating: | Proficient |

Findings

Teachers engage in inquiry-based collaborations. Distributive leadership structures, such as a school ambassador and the Peer Collaborative Teacher (PCT) are in place.

Impact

Inquiry teams support the achievement of school goals and implementation of the Common Core. Teacher leaders have a voice in key decisions that affect student learning across the school.

Supporting Evidence

- During the review, teachers on the math team were observed engaging in an inquiry-based professional collaboration. The team regularly uses a protocol for looking deeply at a single Common Core standard, analyzing what the standard asks students to know and show in their work, analyzing student work and then planning specific instructional next steps. In the observed meeting, teachers analyzed student work from their class, sorted into high, middle and lower performing on the problem-solving task to uncover instructional next steps. Teachers shared their current plans, and then used the remaining time to collaboratively plan reteach lessons. This work, a common practice observed in other team notes shared from across the school, demonstrates an inquiry approach that supports the implementation of the Common Core.

- Teachers in the observed meeting and in a separate question and answer session shared that through their collaborative inquiry, they have improved their lesson planning practices, strengthening their understanding of the school’s lesson planning template and their instructional capacity. As one teacher shared, “Our work has helped me to see how the lesson objective connects the Common Core standard to the work that students do during the lesson. Reviewing the standard with other teachers helps to guide me in what I should be teaching.” Other teachers shared that looking at student work and data with teachers across the grades helps teachers to see the progression of learning in the standards and to see if teachers are on the same page. Another teacher praised the work of the teams for providing her with the language for reteaching content and giving students specific feedback to let students know what they need to work on.

- Distributive leadership structures, such as the school ambassador, PCT, and instructional cabinet allows teachers to have a voice in key decisions that affect student learning across the school. The instructional leadership team meets weekly to access instructional plans and student work from the WIN intervention periods and provides teachers with guidance and strategies to use, which have an impact on student learning across the school, as all participate in WIN instruction. School subject area ambassadors guide teacher professional learning across the school, and have provided guidance and task development strategies to promote stronger discussions and more opportunities for students to write about their thinking in math classrooms across the school.