Quality Review Report

2018-2019

P.S./I.S. 157 The Benjamin Franklin Health & Science Academy

K-8 14K157

850 Kent Avenue
Brooklyn
NY 11205

Principal: Kourtney Boyd

Dates of Review:
March 27, 2019 - March 28, 2019

Lead Reviewer: Kimberly Bradley
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


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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</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><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>
</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>
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</tbody>
</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><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>Additional Finding</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>
</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>
</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>Area of Celebration</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>
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</tbody>
</table>
Area of Celebration

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

Findings
The majority of teachers are engaged in grade-based teacher teams that meet and share best practices. Teacher teams consistently analyze data and student work for students they share.

Impact
Teachers’ collaborations have strengthened their instructional capacity. Teacher team work typically results in progress toward goals for groups of students.

Supporting Evidence

- Teachers have strengthened their instructional capacity through team collaborations. Teachers shared that each elementary grade level has at least two common planning periods each week with one used by each elementary grade team to review student data and that teachers at the middle school grades have common planning time by discipline. In addition to grade-level meetings, teachers also meet in math and literacy vertical teams that have representation across elementary and middle school grade levels, as well as curriculum and Lighthouse teams that both have teacher and school leader representation across all grade levels. A review of the curriculum team rolling agenda provides evidence of the team’s work to monitor the progress of the various teacher teams across the school and to identify what an eighth grader from the school should know by the time they leave the school. As a result of various teacher collaboration structures across the school, teachers are strengthening their instructional capacity.

- An observed second-grade inquiry team looked at student performance data on from the GO Math! Chapter 5 mid-chapter checkpoint and compared it to the results of the pre-assessment. The members of the team used a spreadsheet to record which questions each student answered correctly or incorrectly and listed the standard each question was assessing. The team used the data collected to identify common trends and patterns and trends. Team members identified that while students showed improvement on the standards related to adding and subtracting to solve word problems between the chapter pre- and mid-assessment, students still struggled in particular with explaining their answer in writing. Team members also acknowledged that class work rarely asks students to do this type of thinking and students struggle when they see these types of word problems on a test. The team agreed upon next steps, including mini lessons and adjusting the grouping of students to support students who need additional help and incorporating word problems in exit tickets. Teachers reported that the work of teams has improved student outcomes.

- Grade-level teams analyzed benchmark data throughout the year and developed an action plan document. A review of these documents show that teachers identified the standards that students scored the lowest and highest on as well as surprises the team found in the data. Across grades, teams found that students had difficulty interpreting products and quotients of rational numbers and explaining their thinking in word problems in math. In English Language Arts (ELA), students struggled with determining theme or central idea of a text and analyzing its development over the text and analyzing the structure an author uses to organize the text. Some next steps to address these gaps include adjusting student grouping, more checking for understanding during lessons through exit tickets and providing more examples and visuals. As a result of analysis of student performance data by teacher team, teachers made informed instructional adjustments that resulted in progress toward goals for groups of students.
Findings

Across most classrooms, teaching practices are aligned to curricula and reflect an articulated set of beliefs about how students learn best through connecting to higher-order thinking and class discussions. Teaching strategies provide multiple entry points into curricula, allowing most students to be engaged in appropriately challenging tasks.

Impact

While student groupings across classrooms ensure learners are engaged in appropriately challenging tasks and their work products reflect high levels of thinking, this is not yet happening in the vast majority of classrooms. Teaching practices align with the Danielson Framework for Teaching and provide multiple entry points for most learners.

Supporting Evidence

- The posting of objectives across classrooms in student-friendly language and the use of discussion stems reflects the beliefs that students learn best through higher-order thinking and class discussion. A posted objectives states, “I can close read a grade level text to determine the central idea and cite evidence to support my analysis.” Another posted objective reads, “I can write a compare and contrast response by analyzing a passage.” Examples of discussion frames include “You made a good point when you said…, That makes sense because…, Another way to look at it is…” Students stated that they use some form of discussion stems during class, but this does not happen across the vast majority of grades and content areas.

- In a third-grade literacy class, students worked in groups as they as they annotated their assigned informational text, underlining important information in the text and putting a question mark near words they did not understand. Students also utilized reciprocal teaching strategies of prediction, clarification, questioning, and summarizing. Students were provided discussion stems to use such as “What clues helped you to think about what will happen next?, What strategies can you use to help you understand the meaning of the word?, What are the most important ideas of things to know?” In a seventh-grade math class, students were engaged in heterogeneous groups as they worked on solving multi-step problems that contained positive and negative rational numbers. The teacher modeled how to solve the problem in the front of the room and then gave students time to practice the problems in small groups. While the students were sitting together in groups and had a list of math problem-solving key words to use during their discussion, not all students were working together or provided discussion roles. When the teacher brought the whole class together for mid-lesson checks for understanding, the questions were generated by the teacher and there was limited wait time for student responses before moving to the next part of the lesson. While evidence of student engagement in challenging tasks was observed across some classrooms, there were missed opportunities to ensure all students are engaged in most classrooms.

- During a first-grade dual language class, students were working in small collaborative groups as they worked on opinion essays about their favorite animal. Students were heterogeneously grouped and to support access for English as a New Language (ENL) students, they were paired with students fluent in both their primary language and English. Near the end of the period, the teacher brought the class together and a couple of students volunteered to read their essays to the class and receive glows and groans from students. While some students provided verbal feedback, it was not evident that all students were engaged during the end of the lesson.
Additional Finding

<table>
<thead>
<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 State Standards and integrate the instructional shifts with a focus on text-based answers. Curricula and academic tasks consistently emphasize rigorous habits and higher-order skills.

Impact
Coherent curricula promote college and career readiness for all students. A diversity of learners has access to the curricula and tasks and is cognitively engaged.

Supporting Evidence

- Review of curricular documents revealed alignment to the Common Core State Standards and New York State content standards where applicable, as well as integration of the instructional shifts across grades and content areas. The school uses the Teachers College Reading and Writing Project (TCRWP) curriculum for writing, Fundations for reading, and Go Math! in mathematics. Curriculum documents include evidence of modification by adding extensions that were not included in the adopted curriculum. The school also ensures curricular coherence through the implementation of New York City Social Studies Scope and Sequence and the Next Generation Science Standards.

- The instructional shift requiring that students demonstrate fluency in their mathematical thinking is evident in curricular documents. In a fifth-grade lesson plan, students demonstrate how to find a fractional part of a group and must understand that the denominator of the fraction factor represents the number of equal groups in the whole, and numerator represents the number of those groups someone is interested in. One such problem asked students to determine the fractional number of spokes that are bent or broken on a bicycle and represent that in a fractional group. The instructional shift requiring that students develop their skill in writing from sources emphasizing the use of text-based evidence is apparent in curricular documents. In a seventh-grade English Language Arts (ELA) lesson plan, students read and annotate a piece of text as they look for similarities and differences in two different characters. The lesson plan outlines how students are asked to use their annotations to create a Venn diagram that they will use to write a compare-and-contrast paragraph later in the lesson.

- Unit and lesson plans emphasis critical thinking. A science lesson includes students developing their own definition of science and drawing a picture of their definition that includes labels and details that they shared with a partner. Students were provided specific supports based on their needs such as model drawings and key academic and content-specific vocabulary that would help students describe their definition. A social studies lesson had students debating if English should be the official language of the United States. The lesson includes a list of vocabulary words connected to the primary source documents that students were reading and citing as evidence in their argument. The lesson also included differentiated supports for users including the teacher first modeling for the class and providing opportunities for students to discuss their point of view with a partner. An ELA lesson plan has students using an annotation strategy for comparing and contrasting information found in a text including circling the subjects that are being compared or contrasted, writing an “s” over words that indicate similarities, and writing a “d” over word that indicate differences. Across curricular documents there is evidence that students are provided opportunities to engage in activities that emphasize rigorous habits and higher-order skills.
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

Across classrooms, teachers use rubrics and checklists aligned with the school’s curricula. School leaders and teachers use multiple common assessments to determine student progress toward goals across grades and subject areas.

Impact

Teachers provide students with actionable feedback regarding student achievement. Multiple pieces of assessment data are used to adjust curriculum and instruction over the school year.

Supporting Evidence

- Samples of student work products showed teacher-written, actionable feedback directing students to the steps they should take to strengthen their work. Some examples of that feedback were: “Glow: You used numbers and a number sentence to show your thinking. Grow: Next time, underline the question in the word problem.”; “Glow: You show an understanding of how to read and comprehend informational texts. Grow: Explain scientific concepts and ideas.” During meetings with students, they shared that feedback from teachers and peers is shared with them on a regular basis and is connected to the rubric for the assignment. As a result of teacher feedback, students across classrooms have a clear understanding of how they are progressing.

- Rubrics and checklists are used across all classes and grade levels. A math rubric included student-friendly language and visuals, with statements such as, “I can use multiple strategies like tens and ones, or the number chart to add and subtract bigger numbers. I can explain and model using multiple math tools.” A math checklist reminds students to underline key words, circle important numbers, use a strategy such as a number line, picture, or hands-on tool, check over their work, and use a sentence in their answer. An example of student self-assessment reads, “I understand the problem. My answer is correct. I used a rule, and/or verified that my strategy is correct.” A writing rubric used in grades sixth through eight is used by teachers and students to look at content and analysis, command of evidence, coherence, organization, and style, and control of conventions. As a result of using rubrics and checklists across grades and content areas, assessments, rubrics and providing peer feedback, teachers and students have a clear understanding of the criteria for assessing their learning.

- The administration of multiple common assessments across grades and subjects throughout the year provides data about the skill level of each student and is used by teacher teams in the planning of instruction. Some of these assessments include the state performance assessments, pre and post assessments, Fountas and Pinnell, Degrees of Reading Power, and New York City mini and full-length assessments in math and ELA. As a result of using multiple common assessments and tracking their progress over time, all students are demonstrating increased mastery across grades and subject areas.
Findings
School leaders consistently convey high expectations to staff through ongoing feedback and professional learning aligned to the Danielson Framework for Teaching. School leaders and staff convey high expectations associated with college and career readiness to families.

Impact
Ongoing communication and support from school leaders have increased teachers' understanding of and accountability for school leaders' expectations regarding teaching and learning with an instructional focus on reading informational texts and strengthening mathematical thinking. Families are provided with ongoing information and feedback about expectations and how students are progressing toward college and career readiness.

Supporting Evidence

- Frequent classroom observations by school leaders reinforce expectations for teachers by providing feedback to teachers, utilizing the Danielson Framework for Teaching as the standard for professionalism and quality instruction. Observation reports include specific language from the rubric and evidence from the classroom that supports the rating, along with actionable next steps so that teachers clearly understand expectations about supporting student engagement. The Advance observations also include evidence of the impact of the school's work in the various domains of the Danielson Framework during professional development on teacher practice with a focus on demonstrating knowledge of content and pedagogy, designing coherent instruction, and engaging students in the learning. An example of actionable next steps states, “While your lesson plan was thoughtfully written and included many of the components that make a successful lesson, it did not include supports for all students. Consider creating a teacher/student t-chart in which the teacher writes a real-world situation that corresponds with a product, and students write similar situations using different numbers so they understand the real-world implications." Teachers report they are growing in practices such as more student-centered thinking and discussion based on their observations and feedback and are held accountable by school leaders for meeting expectations and growing in their teacher practice.

- School leaders convey high expectations to staff through a staff handbook, staff memos, emails, and professional development. A review of memos shows evidence of communication that outlines expectations around grading and attendance, lesson and unit planning, classroom and behavior management, classroom expectations, and the school mission that “We partner with students, families, and our community to provide a hands-on, project-based learning environment that fosters critical thinking and challenges students from all backgrounds." Teachers participate in professional development in culturally-responsive teaching, data analysis, content-specific training and positive behavior supports. Through training and professional learning, school leaders are building a culture of high expectations.

- Partnerships with families support students in their progress towards the next grade level and high school readiness. Parents reported that school leaders communicate with them regarding the school's goals, and there is parent involvement in the school's School Leadership Team and Parent Teacher Association. Parents received communication via letters, monthly calendars, emails, phone calls, and the online grading program. In addition, parents spoke of the workshops and meetings the school provides to inform families about how their students are doing throughout the year and preparing for the high school application process. Parents reported that there is at least one adult at the school that knows their students well. School leaders support families in understanding expectations for college and career readiness and in understanding student progress.
Additional Finding

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<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, including for those new to the profession with effective feedback and recommendations from observation cycles. School leaders provide supports for teacher development through professional development opportunities and instructional coaches.

Impact

School leaders are providing effective feedback and convey expectations to teachers using the Danielson Framework for Teaching to inform improvement of instructional practices and plan professional development resulting in pedagogical growth and reflection.

Supporting Evidence

- To support the capacity of teachers including those new to the profession, school leaders worked on the scheduling and calibration of their observations as well as ensuring new teachers were paired with a mentor they meet with on a regular basis in addition to attending new teacher professional development throughout the year provided by staff at the school and district level. School leaders provide frequent observations to build teacher capacity and meet at the beginning of the school year to determine their observation schedule. School leaders developed an observation schedule at the beginning of the year, did their first set of observations together and also worked with central office personnel to improve calibration of their ratings. As a result of the focus on organizing and calibrating their observations, school leaders strengthened their capacity to support the development of teachers.

- The cycle of observations is also supported by instructional coaches who work closely with teachers on improving their instructional practice through professional development and coaching cycles. Coaches work with teachers based on class visits and feedback from coaches and school leaders. A review of coaching logs provides evidence of the support coaches provide to individual teachers with a focus on goal and specific steps, and evidence of success. One goal states “Students will increase reading comprehension through the use of appropriate instructional levelled text. This will be measured using the Fountas and Pinell benchmark system.” Some of the support provided by the coaches included guiding the teacher through the first round of running records and discussing student progress. Teachers shared during meetings that they feel supported by school leaders and coaches and this has resulted in improved instructional practices across grades and subjects.

- In order to support all teachers, the school leader’s instructional focus on improving students’ ability to read informational text and explain their mathematical thinking is emphasized in the feedback provided to teachers and includes references to the Danielson Framework for Teaching Domains 1a: demonstrating knowledge of content and pedagogy, 1e: designing coherent instruction, and 3c: engaging students in learning. This focus was evident in observation feedback, for example, “The teacher displays solid knowledge of the important concepts in the discipline and these relate to one another. Some of the learning activities and materials are aligned with the instructional outcomes and represent moderate cognitive challenge, but with no differentiation for different students.” Another example states, “The teacher provides suitable scaffolding and challenges students to explain their thinking through student annotation as the teacher reads. Create more opportunities for students to have genuine discussions with one another. This can be done with use of talk moves like turn-and-talk or accountable talk.” Through specific feedback aligned with the school’s instructional focus, there is improvement in student engagement as evidenced in higher teacher ratings for 3c: engaging students in learning and Advance observation reports.