Quality Review Report

2018-2019

M.S. 890
Junior High-Intermediate-Middle 22K890

21 Hinckley Place
Brooklyn
NY 11218

Principal: Nicholas Frangella

Dates of Review:
November 29, 2018 - November 30, 2018

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

M.S. 890 serves students in grade 6 through grade 7. 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>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>To what extent does the school...</strong></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>
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</table>
### School Culture

**To what extent does the school...**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Area</th>
<th>Rating</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1.4 Maintain a culture of mutual trust and positive attitudes that supports the academic and personal growth of students and adults</td>
<td>Area of Celebration</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

**To what extent does the school...**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Area</th>
<th>Rating</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1.3 Make strategic organizational decisions to support the school’s instructional goals and meet student learning needs, as evidenced by meaningful student work products</td>
<td>Additional Finding</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3.1 Establish a coherent vision of school improvement that is reflected in a short list of focused, data-based goals that are tracked for progress and are understood and supported by the entire school community</td>
<td>Additional Finding</td>
</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>
</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>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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</table>
Area of Celebration

<table>
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<tr>
<th>Quality Indicator:</th>
<th>1.4 Positive Learning Environment</th>
<th>Rating:</th>
<th>Proficient</th>
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Findings

The school’s approach to culture building, discipline, and social-emotional support, including a focus on character traits, results in a safe and inclusive environment. Structures are in place, such as grade-level advisory, to ensure that each student is known well by at least one adult.

Impact

The school’s safe environment and inclusive culture are conducive to student and adult learning and students and adults treat each other respectfully, with student voice welcome and valued. Students are well-known by at least one adult who provides guidance and supports that align with student learning needs.

Supporting Evidence

- The school’s collaborative focus on positive behavior supports results in a safe and inclusive environment. Posters of the schoolwide behavior matrix posted throughout hallways, classrooms, and offices remind students of the character traits of leadership, integrity, tenacity, and tolerance (LITT). The rubric includes descriptive language of what these traits look and sound like in the classroom, cafeteria, stairs and hallways, and during recess, and this language is reinforced during weekly assemblies with students. Students can earn school bucks for positive behavior that are redeemable for incentives, such as lunch with the principal or school supplies. Students can also apply for student jobs such as a peer tutor, banker, library monitor, or school store manager as another way to earn school bucks and serve as a model for other students. Students reported that the majority of them feel safe, and there is at least one adult they are comfortable speaking to when they have a concern. Staff and students also referred to activities including the Forum on Religion and Forum on Human Rights that support an inclusive culture across the school. Through the school’s collaborative efforts around positive behavior supports, the school’s environment supports the personal growth of students.

- Students in each grade level meet daily with a grade-level advisor who is also their SPARK elective teacher. Samples of advisory topics and lesson plans demonstrate how the school is supporting a safe and inclusive environment. Topics include study and organization skills, college and careers, bullying prevention, conflict resolution, and diversity. The school counselor and advisory teachers also conduct a student survey regarding advisory and review student responses. This review leads to revisions in advisory lessons that focus on students’ getting to know each other better and learning more about different cultures through student-led discussions. Survey results are also used to plan activities and college field trips connected to content areas and student interests. These practices and structures reveal that student voice is valued, students are known well by at least one adult, and there is alignment between those structures and specific student learning needs.

- Students reported that there is at least one adult who knows them well. Students also reported they feel safe at the school, and if there is a disagreement between students, they are comfortable speaking to the dean, counselor, or other staff member to help resolve the problem. The school has a school culture coordinator and a positive behavior teacher team that facilitate workshops around positive behavior management and the behavior matrix. Students also elect student government representatives each year who meet weekly with the school culture coordinator to plan school events based on student interest and build a supportive school culture. Consequently, the social-emotional needs of students are met through multiple staff members who coordinate and support the development and advisement of students.
Area of Focus

| Quality Indicator: | 1.2 Pedagogy | Rating: Proficient |

Findings

Across most classrooms, teacher strategies such as student grouping and the use of graphic organizers provide multiple entry points into the curricula. However, the use of high-quality supports and extensions was not evident in the vast majority of classrooms, as reflected in student work products and participation.

Impact

While most students are engaged in high-level discussions and demonstrate high levels of thinking and participation, student ownership not observed in the vast majority of classrooms, as evident in student work products and discussion.

Supporting Evidence

- In a sixth-grade ICT math class, students applied their understanding of the relationship between two quantities using multiplication. Students worked in partnerships and used graphic organizers as they determined which grocery store had the best deal for specific grocery items. Students who needed additional support first determined the cost per ounce before determining which store had the better deal. Each partnership shared their answers with the partnership next to them. Many students also wrote responses to prompts about the patterns they noticed and how they knew they had found the best deal, but not all students completed a written response. Thus, while the use of graphic organizers, the scaffolding of problems, and the grouping of students based on prior knowledge supports the engagement of most learners in appropriately challenging tasks, not all learners demonstrated their thinking through work products.

- During a sixth-grade social studies lesson on how the first human beings responded to their environment, students used soap to carve models of stone tools used during the Neolithic period. Students worked independently, and each had a choice of tools. Students used a graphic organizer to describe the process used to create the tools, the tool’s qualities and what made the tool distinct. They utilized online resources and primary source documents to research the history of the tool and received peer feedback as they prepared to present their tools. However, some students could not articulate the connection of the activity to their learning. Thus, this lesson provided opportunities for access to learning through multiple modalities, but these supports did not provide all learners with additional entry points into the curricula.

- In a seventh-grade English Language Arts (ELA) lesson, students participated in small group discussions of the major ideas from the text *A Long Walk to Water* as they prepared to write their final essays. Each group had a student serving as a table host and guiding the discussion. Each table had a different question provided by the teacher written down on a large piece of paper, and students wrote their responses on the paper. Students then rotated to the next table to respond to the next question and reviewed and added their responses to the previous responses from other students. Different groups had varying levels of scaffolds to support their work, such as pictures or graphic organizers. Near the end of the lesson, the students reflected individually and identified three changes they wanted to make for the final drafts of their essays, such as including specific references to the text. However, most students did not refer back to their first drafts during their reflection until prompted by the teacher. Similar types of activities and engagement were seen in other classrooms. Consequently, widespread independent student ownership not observed in the vast majority of classrooms.
### 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 staff ensure that curricula are aligned to the Common Core Learning Standards and integrate the instructional shifts. Academic tasks emphasize higher-order skills including questioning and the use of text-based evidence across the majority of grade levels and content areas.

#### Impact

The curricula and academic tasks support college and career readiness skills and student development of rigorous habits and higher-order thinking skills.

#### Supporting Evidence

- A review of lesson plans across content areas revealed that in-class learning emphasizes rigorous habits and higher-order thinking skills, such as the analysis of complex texts. A seventh-grade ELA lesson includes prompts for students to frame their small group written discussion, such as, “What makes Salva an effective leader?”, “What are the physical and emotional factors that enabled Salva to survive?”, and “How has learning about Salva’s survival helped you understand about what people are going through in Sudan or other countries?” An essential question in a sixth-grade science lesson plan states, “How do we know if a chemical reaction has occurred during cellular processes such as photosynthesis and cellular respiration?” Students are expected to construct a scientific explanation based on valid and reliable evidence obtained from sources, describe what occurs during a chemical reaction, and analyze and interpret data to determine similarities and differences in scientific findings.

- Curricular documents demonstrate alignment to the Common Core and integration of the instructional shifts. In a sixth-grade science unit plan focused on energy, students are learning about the effects of friction as they conduct experiments with robots. The plan identified the skills students are working toward, including applying scientific principles to test the design of an object, process, or system and implementing a solution that meets specific criteria. In a social studies unit focused on the American Revolution, learning objectives included researching different colonial perspectives about government representation due to the British actions in the colonies through the analysis of primary and secondary sources. Students are expected to identify the central idea of each text, state the author’s point of view, describe the elements of the text that helped them make that decision, and determine the argument the author is making.

- Curricular documents emphasize higher-order skills across grades and subjects. In a lesson plan for seventh-grade math, the learning objective is written in student-friendly language and states, “I will be able to create an algebraic equation given a real-world scenario, then solve the equation to make an informed decision.” The scenario described in the lesson plan describes that students are going to purchase t-shirts for their school clubs and, by creating an algebraic equation, determine which company would provide the best price. Some of the questions students are being asked to consider in the lesson include, “What are the differences about these equations?”, and “What happened to the total cost as you increased the number of t-shirts for each company?” Based on student progress and analysis of student data, stronger performing students are provided with extension activities and an open-ended task with fewer guiding questions while struggling students are given more guiding supports and scaffolds to assist their learning. Consequently, across lesson and unit plans, there is evidence of access to rigorous and higher-level thinking tasks for groups of students.
Additional Finding

Quality Indicator: 2.2 Assessment  
Rating: Proficient

Findings

Across classrooms, teachers use rubrics and the schoolwide grading policy that are aligned with the school’s curricula. Teacher assessment practices, such as the use of electronic instant feedback, reflect checks for understanding and student self-assessment.

Impact

Teachers provide actionable feedback to students and use ongoing assessment to make adjustments to instruction to meet the learning needs of all students.

Supporting Evidence

- Across classrooms, rubrics and checklists are in alignment with the school’s curricula. A classwork rubric evaluates students’ levels of performance, with the upper end focusing on contributing to group work and discussions with new and relevant information and ideas, producing high-quality assignments, and demonstrating advanced understanding and mastery of content. An essay rubric for literary analysis in ELA evaluates the organization and development of the analysis and the use of evidence. There is a schoolwide grading policy, with the majority of a course’s academic grade coming from summative and formative assessments and a smaller part coming from homework and classwork. Students also receive a separate conduct grade for each class. The school uses an online grading program and both students and parents can login to access information about a student’s progress. Students and parents are also provided with individual performance reports in math and ELA that include overall proficiency ratings as well as their performance on content-specific standards. The school’s use of a common grading policy and rubrics demonstrates an alignment with the school’s curricula and are used to provide feedback to students.

- Across classrooms, samples of student work showed teacher and peer feedback. One example of feedback stated, “You did an excellent job on Part B. You have shown that you understand how to calculate net income.” Another example noted, “Manage your time so you can complete the task to best of your ability. Use the rubric as a guideline to help.” Teachers and peers also provided feedback on writing assignments that required students to use sensory details in a poem about the autumn. An example of a student response was, “I liked how she put information about fall and how she said all the different colors of the leaves.” The teacher’s feedback to the student was, “I like how you used both sensory details and a simile to describe pumpkin pie.” Based on feedback from teachers and peers, instructional adjustments such as the grouping of students are made to meet the learning needs of students.

- Students are provided with opportunities to self-assess their work and maintain a student progress tracker for each content area. This includes a description of each task and the grade earned, as well as the student’s self-reflection and next steps. One student example stated, “I liked that I showed all of my work. Next time, I can elaborate more.” Another student wrote, “Next time, I can add more details about nature.” In some classrooms, teachers utilize electronic instant feedback at different points during the lesson to assess student progress and inform their adjustments to the lesson. For instance, during a science lesson focused on heat transfer, students submitted their responses to the do now question electronically and then shared these with peers. As they did this, the teacher reviewed the do now responses and made on-the-spot lesson adjustments to clarify student misperceptions. As a result of the practices described above, students are learning to reflect on and own their learning.
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 communicate high expectations to the entire staff through weekly emails and the staff handbook. Teacher grade and content teams have established a culture for learning that communicates high expectations for students.

Impact

School leaders provide training to staff about expectations, and staff offer guidance and supports that prepare students for the next level.

Supporting Evidence

- School leaders conduct frequent informal and formal classroom observations and provide feedback utilizing the Danielson Framework for Teaching as the standard for professionalism, quality instruction, and high expectations. Teachers also receive a staff handbook at the beginning of the year that outlines the school's policies for grading and discipline as well as schoolwide learning expectations. The school leadership team sends out a daily staff bulletin email that reminds staff of their expectations and responsibilities. One email sent to the staff reminded them about the upcoming staff book study on culturally responsive teaching and the brain and the associated reading assignment. Other emails communicate expectations about what should be posted on hallway bulletin boards and reinforce the expectation of using assessment and questioning strategies. The principal reviews their expectations with staff members individually and reinforces these when meeting with the entire staff throughout the year. Consequently, staff members have a clear understanding about expectations from school leaders.

- As a Progressive Redesign Opportunity Schools for Excellence (PROSE) school, school leaders and staff design teacher-led professional development connected to the school’s instructional focus. The staff voted to have hour long class periods, later entry and dismissal times, and daily advisory periods. This allows for flexibility in teacher collaboration time, including weekly common planning time and weekly professional learning centering on topics such as data analysis or positive behavior supports. School leaders and teacher leaders review student performance data and staff responses on the professional learning survey completed twice a year. This analysis of the data along with the survey results is used to adjust the professional learning calendar throughout the year. One example of an adjustment made to the professional learning calendar included additional time spent on questioning and assessment techniques.

- In addition to the online grading system used across the school, teachers use the EDAT (English Language Learning Data Analysis Tool) to identify students who need additional support. Using data binders as well as a digital tracking document, progress monitoring occurs throughout the year, with the goals and measures used to assess student progress tracked and reviewed by the staff on a regular basis. During the student meetings, students spoke about how the school is preparing them for the next grade level through high school and college visits as well as through information presented during their daily advisory, including a review of their academic progress. They also discussed how their access to a variety of enrichment electives, such as SPARK classes focused on STEM-based subjects such as Food Science, Robotics, and Urban Agriculture and elective classes such as Korean Language, Latin Dance, Chess, Art Studio, and Choir, is preparing them for high school. Moreover, structures such as advisory and peer tutoring are preparing them for the next level. Because of these guidance and support structures, students are aware of their progress and are prepared for the next level.
**Additional Finding**

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<th>Quality Indicator:</th>
<th>4.2 Teacher Teams and Leadership Development</th>
<th>Rating:</th>
<th>Proficient</th>
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**Findings**

The majority of teachers are engaged in grade-level and cross-content teacher teams that meet to review curricula and differentiation strategies, as well as best practices and utilizing protocols to review student work. Teacher teams consistently analyze data and student work for students they share.

**Impact**

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

**Supporting Evidence**

- The majority of teachers meet in weekly grade-level and cross-content teams to review student progress toward goals developed and based on beginning-of-the-year data analysis of State math and ELA assessments. Teams are expected to have meeting agendas and minutes that are saved electronically. Teachers reported that they establish the team's goals, such as identifying power standards at the beginning of the year, to determine how to meet students where they are instructionally. This process is on-going, with analysis of student performance data, including pre- and post-assessments, continuing through the year. Teachers also reported they feel comfortable providing feedback to each other when examining student work and reflecting on their instructional practices. Thus, the work of inquiry teams across the school supports the instructional focus of developing challenging problems and tasks to foster a growth mindset in all students.

- A review of inquiry team minutes shows that each team works on reviewing data in the tracking tool and monitoring the progress of teacher-selected focus students as they identify potential strategies to support these students. Examples of next steps culled from different teams included the need for teachers to model for students, to provide them with tables to organize problems, and to expose them to multiple methods of solving mathematical problems. In ELA, next steps included modeling how to formulate a strong claim, which included reviewing examples of claims from peers. Based on the work of the teams, teachers update the tracking tool on a regular basis, with notes on the strategies used for specific students, and make adjustments to student goals. As a result, teacher instructional practices are strengthened by professional collaborations that review and monitor student work and data.

- An observed grade-level team reviewed student work from a recent assignment from two focus students. The team followed routines, including designating a facilitator, time-keeper, and notetaker. There was a written agenda, and the team utilized the Atlas protocol, which includes selecting, describing, and interpreting the student work as well as determining implications for classroom practice. In the student work examined, the team observed that while the focus students were showing improvement in responding to all parts of the prompts in their extended writing responses, they need to incorporate more relevant text-based evidence and develop their conclusions to connect to their claims. A strategy suggested by the team included the continued use and reinforcement of the RACE (Restate, Answer, Cite, and Explain) protocol with students who need additional support. Across most teacher inquiry teams, the analysis of student work and data results in improved teacher practice, as this team was able to identify specific student needs and develop instructional strategies to support them.