Quality Review Report

2018-2019

Tag Young Scholars
K-8 04M012
240 East 109 Street
Manhattan
NY 10029
Principal: Janette Cesar

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

Lead Reviewer: Jacqueline King-Robinson
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

Tag Young Scholars serves students in grade K through grade 8. You will find information about this school, including enrollment, attendance, student demographics, and data regarding academic performance, at http://schools.nyc.gov/Accountability/tools/report/default.htm.

School Quality Ratings

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Instructional Core</th>
<th>Area</th>
<th>Rating</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>To what extent does the school...</td>
<td></td>
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</tr>
<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>Well Developed</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>Well Developed</td>
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</tbody>
</table>
## School Culture

*To what extent does the school...*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Area</th>
<th>Rating</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1.4</td>
<td>Maintain a culture of mutual trust and positive attitudes that supports the academic and personal growth of students and adults</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3.4</td>
<td>Establish a culture for learning that communicates high expectations to staff, students and families, and provide supports to achieve those expectations</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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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1.3</td>
<td>Make strategic organizational decisions to support the school’s instructional goals and meet student learning needs, as evidenced by meaningful student work products</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3.1</td>
<td>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>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4.1</td>
<td>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>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4.2</td>
<td>Engage in structured professional collaborations on teams using an inquiry approach that promotes shared leadership and focuses on improved student learning</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5.1</td>
<td>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>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Area of Celebration

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

Findings

Through the Project-Based Learning (PBL) lead teachers’ guidance, teacher inquiry work and analyzing student work curricula are aligned to the Common Core Learning and State standards and strategically incorporate the instructional shifts. Project-based learning units emphasize rigorous habits and higher-order thinking skills and promote cognitive engagement.

Impact

Classroom-based academic tasks and schoolwide PBL units promote college and career readiness for all students and curricula coherence across grades. The refinement of curricula tasks, based on student performance data, promotes cognitive engagement and requires rigorous habits and the demonstration of higher-order thinking.

Supporting Evidence

- Across the curricula student-to-student discussions are embedded and well planned. For example, in one seventh-grade science lesson plan, students practice listening carefully to one another, consider classmates’ ideas and perspectives and respond directly to their peers using academic vocabulary and textual evidence to support them in answering the focus question, “How do human actions affect the environment?” In a third grade shared-inquiry lesson plan, students are required to engage in discussion by using textual evidence to support their answers, connect information from various parts of the text to respond to an interpretive question, self-reflect and critique the discussion and distinguish their own point of view from that of the narrator or characters from the story. Thus, curricula documents reviewed evidenced that the instructional shifts are strategically integrated into the curricula promote college and career readiness and require students to demonstrate their thinking by applying rigorous habits and higher-order thinking skills.

- The schoolwide focus on data-driven instruction launches at the beginning of the school year. School staff analyzes the June Instructional Report item analysis from the New York State assessments. The results from the data analysis are subsequently used to create six-week action plans that require teachers to identify the standard or skill being addressed, teaching points for each lesson, what misconceptions will be addressed and which students will participate. A third grade English Language Arts (ELA) action plan identified students in need of additional support with particular standards and adjustments to the curriculum for the top one-eighth of students and students not yet meeting the standards. For example, a tier three activity struggling learners required students to write a paragraph describing an occasion in which this proverb rang true in their life to make a text-to-self connection.

- A review of curricula plans revealed components for all students, including English Language Learners (ELLs) and students with disabilities, those on level and students performing at a higher level. For example, a fifth-grade science lesson plan on patterns of Earth and sky included differentiation supports and extensions such as providing students with a graphic organizer to organize the data from their investigation helping students make sense of the results. They then had to self-identify a partner to share and reflect on the data collected. An extension was for students to choose three new constellations to investigate and compare their results to the original investigation. Additionally, teachers identify guided reading groups based of the results from running records. A kindergarten guided reading group plan identified the students that would be in each group, the days that groups will meet, what tier of intervention for each group, guided lesson plans that would be used and the literacy centers that will support cognitive engagement for all learners.
Area of Focus

Quality Indicator: 4.1 Teacher Support and Supervision
Rating: Proficient

Findings
School leaders support the development of all teachers, including those new to the profession, through cycles of formal and informal observations, targeted professional development, and assistance from coaches. Observations by school leaders provide feedback that is actionable and articulates expectations with clear next steps.

Impact
Although school leaders offer effective feedback that results in positive growth for all teachers, as of yet observations are not yet strategically targeted relative to available resources to ensure maximum effect for further deepening of teacher development.

Supporting Evidence

- School leaders develop a schedule for observations informed by the Danielson Framework for Teaching, the results of which provides feedback with strengths and next steps aligned to the instructional focus and a date for future follow-up. In addition, school leaders engage in learning walks, targeting specific instructional practices that are used to give all teachers specific formative feedback. New teachers receive additional feedback on their performance from mentors, a school-based coach and teacher peers. School leaders use the Advance data to determine the components in which teachers scored the lowest relative to the Framework for Teaching, informing teacher participation in intervisitations, follow-up by the school leader, and specifics as to what they are focusing on. However, while most teachers are constantly provided with feedback that supports strengthening their pedagogy, as yet these strategic cycles do not result in maximizing teacher development.

- Teachers participate in six to eight week Professional Development (PD) cycles. At the start of the cycle, teachers identify a grade wide problem of practice related to gaps in classroom instruction that may be contributing to students underperforming. As a team, teachers identify strategies that they will implement grade wide and with individual students to help students perform at a higher level. For example, some of the PD topics included using data to inform differentiation of instruction and looking at student work. In addition, based on individual or group needs, teachers engage in the practice of intervisitation to assess the impact that the cycle is having on teacher development and student achievement. Teachers reported that these PD cycles have been essential in improving the quality of their instruction and helping them meet their professional goals.

- A review of observation reports reveals that teachers receive written feedback that captures their strengths, assesses the quality of teacher and student work, and provides actionable next steps relative to student engagement, questioning techniques, and assessment during lessons. For example, in one report, the school leader commented, “Lesson plans should specifically account for possible student misconceptions. To bring this activity and others to the next level, have students develop their own rubric.” Although teachers receive next steps from observation reports and feedback from their peers, specific resources to support teacher development have yet to be articulated via the reports.
**Additional Finding**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Quality Indicator:</th>
<th>1.2 Pedagogy</th>
<th>Rating:</th>
<th>Well Developed</th>
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**Findings**

Across the vast majority of classrooms, teaching practices are aligned to the curricula and reflect the schoolwide belief that students learn best when engaged in active discussions, self-reflection and peer assessment. Student PBL work products reflect high levels of student thinking, participation and ownership.

**Impact**

Shared beliefs among staff about how students learn best lead to student discussions and work products that evidence high levels of thinking and student ownership.

**Supporting Evidence**

- Student discussions evidence high levels of thinking across grades and subjects. During a visit to a seventh grade science class students were observed discussing how human consumption of resources affects the environment. One student stated, “There is no need to hunt because people can purchase animals that have been domesticated from a farm.” Another student disagreed and stated, “We should hunt because you can get food and earn money. It is okay as long as you use all of the animal.” A student described that if the wolf population became extinct, the deer population would increase because the wolves would no longer consume deer. In addition, students read and annotated two articles and reviewed food chain diagrams to support their claims.

- Across grades and subjects, students create goals and subsequently assess their progress toward achieving those goals. As students update their goals teachers also adjust the make-up of student groups, allowing students to be aware of and recognize ownership of their growth. An example of one student’s goal was, “My goal is to create a pictograph to show data and create an appropriate key. I can accomplish this goal by looking at the key and making sure it is accurate or correct.” Students also determine a date that they expect to master their goal. The expected date for mastery of this student’s goal was October 1, 2018; the actual date of mastery was October 16, 2018.

- Teachers facilitate lessons in which students are highly engaged and actively participate in cooperative learning and student-student discussions, embodying the coherent set of beliefs that students learn best when they work together. During a visit to a first grade classroom, students were observed assessing their PBL project. Each group member had a role, including a summarizer, checker and presenter, a questioner and someone responsible for providing positive feedback, as well as someone to ensure that the group remained on task. Additionally, there were task cards that communicated the expectations for each role and discussion prompts. Each group displayed high levels of thinking, participation and ownership. While trying to determine if the placement of buildings in their city were equitable, one student stated, “People far from the park cannot go to the circus. Should we add more circuses?” Another student responded, “If you put it in the middle both parts of the city will have access.” The student responsible for providing feedback stated, “I am impressed that you suggested putting in the middle.” Each group member was engaged and had the necessary tools to support high levels of participation and demonstration of student thinking.
## Findings

Schoolwide, teachers use grade-level PBL projects and common assessments aligned to the curricula and ongoing checks for understanding, (CFU), that allow for student consistent engagement in peer- and self-reflection.

## Impact

Teacher assessment practices result in effective instructional adjustments during classroom instruction, resulting in increased mastery for all students. Across classrooms, students are aware of their next steps in learning.

## Supporting Evidence

- Across all grades, teachers utilize a looking at student work protocol to analyze PBL projects and Rally assessment data to monitor student progress and determine next steps for students. The data is further used to develop six-week action plans that focus on the content skills not mastered throughout the unit. Content and skills are tracked on a progress-monitoring sheet to ensure that gaps in skills are noted when narrowed. The use of this tool allows teachers to reteach for the bottom tier, while providing enrichment opportunities for students in the top tier. Review of a progress-monitoring sheet for fifth and sixth grade students performing in the bottom one eighth reveals that on average student proficiency levels on year-to-year standardized assessments increased by one proficiency level, including students with disabilities and English language Learners (ELLs).

- When planning for instruction teachers identify questions that will be asked as CFU. Across all classrooms visited, teachers were observed checking in with small groups and individual students to ask questions that promoted student self-assessment of their learning. Teachers use class trackers to gather data from CFUs that is then used to inform student groupings for future instruction.

- Schoolwide, teachers administer running record benchmark assessments. Results from this assessment, along with other common assessments, are recorded on a form that requires teachers to identify the date of the assessment, student reading levels, strengths and areas of challenge. Additionally, the results are used to determine guided reading groups. A kindergarten guided reading group plan identifies the students for each group, frequency that the groups will meet, the tier intervention, the guided reading lessons that are listed in sequential order and the literacy centers that students will complete. Students performing in the bottom one sixth of the class will receive guided reading three days per week. During center time, they will work on “swat the right word”, rhyming words, initial sound, ending sound, building words, write and wipe and initial sound object sort centers. Students who perform in the top tier receive guided reading one time per week. The lessons for these students included reading with expression and intonation, making text-to-text connections and answering inferential questions. Student Rally and Achieve assessment data reveal that students, including students with disabilities and ELLs have increased proficiency levels in ELA and math.
Additional Finding

| Quality Indicator: | 3.4 High Expectations | Rating: | Well Developed |

Findings

School leaders consistently communicate high expectations to the entire staff via the TAG Staff Handbook and weekly emails. School staff provides families with syllabi that communicate instructional expectations for each course, classroom norms, assignments and procedures.

Impact

Teachers benefit from a culture of mutual accountability within the structure of their grade and advisory teams. Explicit communications empower families to support their children’s academic progress toward college and career readiness.

Supporting Evidence

- The TAG Staff Handbook communicates expectations for professionalism, instruction, curricula planning and participation in professional learning communities. Weekly emails reiterate expectations and provide staff with additional updates needed to ensure a safe and orderly learning environment. All teachers agreed that the weekly emails provide transparent communication and promotes accountability.

- All families receive a TAG Parent Handbook that communicates safety and security procedures, school policies, information regarding on-site health services, schoolwide curricula, after-school programs and information regarding the Parent Teacher Association. Parents have access to an online grading platform where they can view and monitor their children’s progress. Additionally, there is a schoolwide website that provides families with the school mission and vision, staff contact list, upcoming events, admissions information and helpful links to resources for students and families. During the parent meeting, all parents agreed that the school is very responsive when there is a concern. Parents stated that the staff is always accessible and they will respond right away using the online platform.

- Accountability is embedded in the school’s approach to supporting teachers. Teachers request to attend Professional Development (PD) aligned to schoolwide instructional foci and they must agree to demonstrate its impact on their pedagogy. As an example, a team of staff members attended an out-of-state training for PBL and are responsible for ensuring that all grades incorporate at least one PBL unit into the curricula. The instructional cabinet conducts daily classroom visits and walkthroughs, in order to provide feedback to the principal around the implementation of the PD attended. In addition, a consultation committee made up of teachers meets with staff members to discuss any questions or concerns they may have and works with school leadership to address the concerns. Thus, there is mutual accountability between staff and administration.
**Findings**

All teachers are engaged in six-week inquiry cycles across grades and subjects. Teacher teams analyze student work and assessment data using a *Looking at Student Work* (LASW) protocol to identify a problem of practice and brainstorm strategies to increase student performance.

**Impact**

Collaborations within grade teams and the PBL team have strengthened teacher instructional capacity, established a level of schoolwide instructional coherence and improved student performance and achievement.

**Supporting Evidence**

- Grade level teams work together during common planning periods using a LASW protocol that allows teams to not only to track student progress but to reflect on teaching practices and identify instructional and content changes needed to improve student results and support schoolwide coherence. As several teacher and school administrators reported separately, once the grade team has agreed on a strategy they design lessons to incorporate it. Subsequently, staff members participate in intervisitations and utilize the LASW protocol to analyze the results of the attempted strategies and evaluate its effectiveness. Teacher team work has resulted in instructional coherence across the school, students are fluent in the use of classroom routines and there is improved student achievement for all students as evidenced by ELA Rally benchmark assessment data reviewed.

- After reviewing the June instructional report and Rally assessment data, school teams noticed that across the school students struggled with standards that required them to analyze the craft and structure of a text and determine the author’s purpose. In response teacher teams created a six-week action plan to address this as a problem of practice. Each team’s plans from kindergarten to two incorporated unpacking the craft and structure standards, identification of an article to support appropriate strategies, study text using a “zoom in zoom out” protocol and co-created instructional materials and lesson plans. All learning plans reviewed aligned to the specific identified grade wide focus standards.

- Schoolwide utilization of an analysis protocol to analyze data and develop action plans to inform small group targeted instruction has resulted in mastery for groups of students, as evidenced in the reviewed progress monitoring trackers. The protocol requires teachers to identify two standards that are an area of need, conduct error analysis, and develop an action plan with a deeper analysis of students performing in the bottom one eighth of the class. Additionally, teachers use a progress monitoring tracker that identifies the standards being re-taught, which students need to work on the identified standards and the date of either attempted mastery or full mastery.