Quality Review Report

2018-2019

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Elementary 04M083
219 East 109 Street
Manhattan
NY 10029

Principal: Frances Castillo

Dates of Review:
January 24, 2019 - January 25, 2019

Lead Reviewer: Edward Hazen
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>Area of Focus</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>Additional Finding</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>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
### School Culture

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>To what extent does the school...</th>
<th>Area</th>
<th>Rating</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1.4 Maintain a culture of mutual trust and positive attitudes that supports the academic and personal growth of students and adults</td>
<td>Additional Finding</td>
<td>Well Developed</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>
<td>Well Developed</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

### Systems for Improvement

<table>
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<tr>
<th>To what extent does the school...</th>
<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>
<td>Well Developed</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>
<td>Proficient</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>
<td>Well Developed</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>Area of Celebration</td>
<td>Well Developed</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>
<td>Proficient</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Findings

The vast majority of teachers use common planning time to analyze student data and engage in inquiry-based professional collaboration. Teacher teams systematically analyze data and student work products using a structured protocol.

Impact

Teacher teams’ analysis has resulted in school-wide instructional implementation of the Common Core Learning Standards and instructional shifts found in lesson plans and units of study. Teacher instructional capacity strengthens and leads to improved student achievement.

Supporting Evidence

- The vast majority of teachers engage in inquiry-based work via grade-level Professional Learning Communities (PLCs). Teacher teams use a structured Literacy Design Collaborative (LDC) protocol to review curricula, student work and analyze assessment data. This results in shared curricular and lesson plan improvements, aligned to the schoolwide goal of collaborating to create rigorous units of study that have students engage in purposeful academic tasks and authentic discussion, emphasizing high levels of thinking to promote college and career readiness. The PLC teams identify gaps in student achievement or problems of practice and engage in inquiry work to examine the impact of specific instructional strategies on improving student work products and achievement levels. After teachers revise units of study and integrate strategies into classroom practice, teams assess which strategies were effective in demonstrating a positive impact on teaching and learning. Teachers introduce across classrooms strategies identified as effective in addressing skill deficits, resulting in schoolwide instructional coherence.

- Teachers reported that common collaboration time results in improvements in pedagogy and enhances professional practices across grades and subjects, as they have time to share specific instructional strategies and practices that can improve student engagement. Teachers reported analyzing benchmark and grade-level interim assessments, and informal assessments, such as exit tickets, to determine if students were able to use sufficient supporting textual evidence when writing an argument or making a claim during class debate. Scaffolds and supports for students with disabilities and English Language Learners (ELLs) have resulted in increased use of academic language and accountable talk, as evidenced by student participation data. Consequently, progress toward the schoolwide goal of engaging all students in rigorous reading, writing and discourse has led to improvements in the attainment of literacy skills across grades and classes. The percentage of students meeting or exceeding proficiency on the State English Language Arts (ELA) assessment increased from 39 percent in 2017 to 49 percent in 2018.

- Teacher teams meet regularly to analyze assessment data from a variety of sources, including New York State exams and common grade level interim tests. To provide teacher teams with baseline data, school leaders and teachers also administer STAR math and literacy assessments in addition to end-of-unit assessments to inform changes to curricula and instruction. Teachers use these data to create instructional groups and provide targeted interventions for struggling students. For example, an observed fourth grade PLC engaged in item analyses of a math assessment to identify trends in student skill deficits and determine the implications for instruction to help close the achievement gap. The team noted that students commonly knew procedural math such as order of operations but struggle with conceptual math. These practices resulted in an increase in the percentage of students meeting or exceeding proficiency on the State math assessment, from 41 percent in 2017 to 54 percent in 2018, which is 7 percentage points higher than the citywide average.
## Area of Focus

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

### Findings

The school leaders and faculty ensure alignment to the Common Core and integration of the instructional shifts, with an emphasis on implementing culturally responsive curricula. Teachers plan rigorous academic tasks to engage students in challenging academic and metacognitive tasks, leading to improved work products.

### Impact

Curricula and academic tasks build coherence across subjects and grades and support college and career readiness for students, including those with diverse learning needs. However, the vast majority of teachers have yet to plan strategically for engaging, higher-level cognitive tasks for all students, including the highest-achieving students.

### Supporting Evidence

- A review of curricula indicates evidence of teacher PLC teamwork to integrate the Common Core and instructional shifts in English Language Arts (ELA), math, social studies, and science. Across disciplines and grade levels, students are required to develop claims and counterclaims and cite sufficient supporting artifacts and textual evidence from a variety of sources to justify arguments or defend stances when making a claim. Teachers also plan interdisciplinary units of study incorporating rigorous tasks derived from the LDC methodology for designing high quality curriculum modules. A review of meeting minutes, agendas and lesson plans indicate that teachers use LDC teacher competencies rubrics to measure the level of rigor in their lessons when lesson planning.

- Faculty members meet weekly in PLC teams to review and revise curriculum maps, unit plans, and lesson plans to ensure accessibility for all students. Teachers analyze student work samples and assessment data, including STAR math and literacy results, interim assessments, and exit tickets to refine curricula and include supports such as scaffolds and differentiated tasks or materials. The school leaders meet with teacher teams to determine the impact of the grade-level and vertical teamwork, such as the inclusion of multiple entry points into lessons, extension activities for higher performing students, and the use of the LDC model when planning lessons. An observed PLC team analyzed responses on a common math assessment in order to identify common misconceptions or gaps in learning. The team noted that students commonly knew procedural math such as order of operations but struggle with conceptual math, so a determination was made to plan for small group instruction where teachers would model specific strategies students could use.

- A review of meeting minutes and agendas indicates that grade level team meetings focus on planning lessons that provide whole-class and individualized supports, allowing multiple access points to lessons through differentiation of tasks. Teachers use data to plan interventions for students who struggle and revisit interventions used to assess students’ progress toward meeting benchmarks. Team analysis of instructional practices often results in shifts in pedagogy and an increased awareness of student misconceptions. Integrated Co-Teaching (ICT) teacher teams meet to plan lessons based on student needs, ensuring multiple entry points, scaffolding, and differentiation. However, a review of lesson plans indicated that universal designs for learning that include differentiated instruction and materials is not yet consistently included in lesson plans by all teachers so that all students, including ELLs and the highest-achieving students, are cognitively challenged.
**Additional Finding**

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

Teaching practices align to the school’s belief about how students learn best. Pedagogy consistently utilizes strategies such as the workshop model learning structure, questioning, and discussions to promote high levels of thinking and engagement for a diversity of learners.

**Impact**

Across grades and subjects, teaching practices consistently reflect school-identified best practices and provide students with challenging learning tasks that require them to use critical thinking, analysis, and problem solving. Tasks consistently encourage inquiry, collaboration, and active listening among students.

**Supporting Evidence**

- Across grade levels and content areas, teaching practices align with the school’s instructional foci that aligns with the articulated set of beliefs about how students learn best as identified in the school’s vision statement. The school’s leadership team selected the student-centered gradual release model of instruction to ensure that teachers differentiate instruction and address students’ individualized learning styles, needs, and modalities. These observed practices, which encourage instruction in small ability-based groups or student activity stations, provided students with access to scaffolds such as manipulatives, graphic organizers, and visuals thereby reflecting the gradual release model of instruction. Across most classrooms visited, differentiated instruction was used to allow multiple entry points into the lesson. However, in some classes, there were no specialized instructional strategies for students.

- In most classes visited, teachers used strategies such as inquiry, collaborative learning, questioning, and discussions to promote cognitive challenge and engagement. Teachers design rigorous activities and use scaffolding techniques to provide entry points into lessons and academic tasks for a variety of learners. To begin a third-grade ELA lesson, the teacher modeled how to paraphrase key details from a text prior to students transitioning to ability-based groups to practice differentiated paraphrasing tasks with a peer while also receiving one-on-one coaching from the teacher as needed. In a co-taught ELA/ELL class, one teacher demonstrated this structure by modeling how to use transitional words before students were directed to work independently, in a leveled ability group. The co-teacher provided small group instruction to students who needed further support.

- In most observed classes, students engaged in structured group or partner work requiring high levels of collaborative thinking and discussion. In most classrooms, students were accountable for engaging in collaborative tasks and contributing to the work of the cooperative learning groups. For example, in a social studies class, the teacher used a software program projected on the interactive whiteboard so that individual students and groups could monitor their level of participation. In a fourth grade math lesson, students worked in small groups to solve division word problems. Students stated that they were aware of the group work expectations and their individual roles for engaging with their peers; however, since there was not a formal structure to ensure that all students were accountable for contributing to the task, not all students participated equally in solving the problems.
Findings

Across classrooms, teachers use common assessment data to adjust curricula and instruction. Teachers create rubrics that align with the curricula across grades and subjects.

Impact

The use of rubrics leads to effective feedback to teachers regarding student progress and performance. Teachers use common assessment data to assess students’ progress toward meeting the standards and inform revisions made to the curricula and pedagogy.

Supporting Evidence

- Across disciplines and grade levels, teachers use common assessments and rubrics that align to the grade level curricula, Common Core Learning Standards and to the content standards. Teachers use LDC rubrics, student check lists, anchor charts and exemplars to assess student writing across the curriculum. Students stated that the use of exemplars in conjunction with teacher and peer feedback and self-reflection helped improve their writing and prepare them for the State math and ELA assessments. However, a review of student work indicated that the quality of meaningful and actionable feedback they received varied across grades and classes.

- Teachers provide actionable feedback to students in the form of glows, or areas of strength, and grows, or next steps for improvement, which students follow to improve their work. Across grades and subjects, teachers use LDC rubrics and student checklists to support students’ writing. The checklists serve as guides for students to ensure they include all of the components required to achieve proficiency or above and promotes student ownership of their work. Students reported that rubrics, checklists, anchor papers and teacher feedback have contributed to their becoming better writers. For example, students stated that teacher feedback statements asking them to provide additional textual details when supporting their claims when writing argumentative essays has resulted in them being more selective when deciding what evidence to use to back their arguments.

- Across grades and departments, teachers use common assessments to determine student progress toward achieving mastery of the standards and to identify trends in student achievement and adjust curricula and pedagogy accordingly. School leaders and teachers reported that the decision to implement the writing about reading initiative was the result of an analysis of assessment data and student work samples that revealed students were struggling to reach mastery in writing. Similarly, to improve the quality of student writing in grades two through five, the school decided to work with an outside educational expert to revise their curricula and assessments to align with the Common Core and create more rigorous, relevant and engaging lessons. The decision was made after analysis of student assessment data showed gaps in the number of students achieving mastery in their constructed responses.
Findings

The principal and faculty consistently communicate high expectations to students and their families through workshops, coaching sessions, and other family engagement events. An established culture for learning promotes student ownership of their educational experiences.

Impact

Systems of accountability for students and partnerships with families ensure that all students, including students with disabilities, are aware of their progress toward college and career readiness. Strong parent participation in the progress of their children results in all students prepared for the next level.

Supporting Evidence

- School leaders and staff members implement effective strategies for communicating high expectations about college and career readiness and partner with families to ensure that all students meet or exceed those expectations. Students and parents reported that they are aware of the school’s expectations to prepare all students for the secondary level and college. They receive regular updates on student progress through traditional means such as report cards and parent-teacher conferences. The majority of students and parents stated that teachers are very accessible and can communicate with their child's teacher through a variety of means including emails and mobile applications. Parents expressed appreciation that they can receive information about upcoming events and workshops via text notifications from the school's mobile application so that they are always aware of important school or class events.

- Parents reported that the Parent Teacher Association (PTA) is very involved with the school and that school leaders and staff are committed to have families become active partners in their child’s learning. The School Leadership Team (SLT) works with parents to identify prioritized student needs and implement programs to support student progress toward increasing academic achievement. Promotion of social/emotional growth and health and wellness is through their schoolwide wellness program and Positive Behavior Intervention and Support (PBIS) program. An outcome of the PBIS work is peer conflict resolution, which present opportunities for students to reflect on untoward behaviors and develop plans for making positive choices. Parents noted that the expectations for students and faculty to interact positively and consider the choices they make are resulting in their children being able to self-regulate their behaviors at school and home. A review of correspondence from school leaders and staff indicates that they invite parents to learn how to support their students’ social emotional and academic growth at home during the school's family engagement events. Parents reported that these events have provided them with the skills necessary to assist their children academically at home.

- The school’s leadership team and faculty communicate high expectations to students and provide ongoing support that is required to meet those expectations and promote ownership of student academic work. The staff has a set of clear, systematic structures, such as one-on-one student conferencing and student-led parent and teacher conferences that ensures students’ monitoring of progress toward their reading and writing goals. Parents reported there is a grading policy in place that clearly articulates academic progress to families. In addition, students know their reading levels and ways to improve. Interviewed students confirmed that teachers hold them to high expectations and feel they are being adequately prepared for their next level. Upper grade students shared that the guidance department provides them with guidance and support in deciding where to apply to middle school.
Additional Finding

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Quality Indicator:</th>
<th>4.1 Teacher Support and Supervision</th>
<th>Rating:</th>
<th>Well Developed</th>
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Findings

School leaders support the professional growth of teachers by using strategic cycles of observation that provide meaningful feedback with actionable next steps for improvement and identify professional development (PD) needs to continue to build teacher capacity.

Impact

An effective observation cycle using the Danielson Framework for Teaching and collegial support from teacher peers, through intervisitation, results in elevated schoolwide instructional practices that promote professional growth, reflection, and improved pedagogy.

Supporting Evidence

- The school leaders have an effective observation cycle in place to support the professional development of teachers and to provide actionable feedback on instructional practices via frequent classroom visitations and follow-up collegial conversations. School leaders frequently analyze teacher observation notes and data, and student data to determine progress towards meeting the schoolwide instructional goals, making adjustments accordingly to ensure alignment to the instructional foci. For example, the school leadership team provided professional learning sessions on initiatives such as writing about reading, effective questioning techniques, guided reading, the Mood Meter and LDC to ensure schoolwide coherence. Similarly, teachers new to the profession or school or those requiring additional professional learning on specific practices receive targeted support from the administrative team and lead teachers or universal literacy coach. Follow-up observations provide them with time to reflect on their practice and make adjustments for improvement.

- Teachers report that the structured observation and inquiry work cycles have resulted in a supportive culture that has improved professional practice. This process includes PLC teamwork focused on improving pedagogy via classroom intervisitation and meaningful feedback on formal and informal observations by school leaders and teacher peers. For instance, an example of actionable feedback from one observation report was, “When you monitored student groups, you never documented what you observed. Taking notes will assist you in gathering data to inform the next lesson or the unit as you move along.” Teachers further reported that informal collegial feedback from intervisitations has strengthened their pedagogy and helped them implement strategies to support schoolwide goals, such as increasing student engagement with student-centered dialogue.

- School leaders clearly articulate instructional expectations through a variety of means, including daily emails, so that teachers can align their practices to school and professional goals. Teachers report that one of these expectations is for strategic use of protocols to analyze student data and work products when planning instruction. Teachers participate in professional learning and work with teams via weekly, collaborative inquiry groups, resulting in teachers and instructional leaders reflecting on pedagogy and collaborating to meet shared goals through activities such as providing collegial feedback from peer intervisitations and school leaders’ learning walks. These learning cycles lead to a professional learning plan that identifies gaps in instruction and provides support to strengthen teachers’ ability to close the gaps. For example, analysis of observation data by school leaders and feedback from classroom visits identified a schoolwide need for student-centered literacy-based tasks that promote high levels of thinking, writing and discourse across content areas. Thus, common practices and protocols such as guided reading and writing about reading address this need, including support from instructional coaches to help teachers improve their practices in these areas.