Quality Review Report

2018-2019

M.S. 224 Manhattan East School for Arts & Academics

Junior High-Intermediate-Middle 04M224

410 East 100 Street
Manhattan
NY 10029

Principal: Luis Genao

Dates of Review:
May 29, 2019 - May 30, 2019

Lead Reviewer: Phyllis Siwiec
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. 224 Manhattan East School for Arts & Academics serves students in grade 6 through grade 8. You will find information about this school, including enrollment, attendance, student demographics, and data regarding academic performance, at http://schools.nyc.gov/Accountability/tools/report/default.htm.

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>Developing</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>Developing</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2.2 Align assessments to curricula, use on-going assessment and grading practices, and analyze information on student learning outcomes to adjust instructional decisions at the team and classroom levels</td>
<td>Additional Finding</td>
<td>Proficient</td>
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### 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>Proficient</td>
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<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>Area of Celebration</td>
<td>Proficient</td>
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### Systems for Improvement

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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>Proficient</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>Area of Focus</td>
<td>Developing</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>
<td>Proficient</td>
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<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>Developing</td>
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Area of Celebration

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

School leaders consistently convey high expectations to the entire staff through their staff handbook, feedback from walkthroughs, and professional learning aligned to the Danielson *Framework for Teaching*. The school provides ongoing information to families regarding student progress toward college and career readiness.

Impact

School leaders provide training and facilitate a system of accountability for expectations. Families understand student progress towards meeting standards.

Supporting Evidence

- School leaders share expectations of high standards with staff including behavioral and academic elements through their staff handbook which lists four core values that serve as the bedrock of school culture, classroom practice and interpersonal engagement. These values are respect for art and academics, respect for all, commitment to community, and respect for self. When teachers receive their staff handbook, they review a wide variety of expectations ranging from day to day professional conduct, student safety, grading and academic policies, as well as classroom environment guidelines and the Danielson *Framework for Teaching*. The accountability system is based on walkthroughs, informal feedback, and monitoring meeting minutes by school leaders.

- Professional development focused on goal attainment and training in inquiry research and practice reflects the importance of expectations on staff in studying small strategic groups of underachieving students. A teacher stated that one of her targeted inquiry students in science had a breakthrough with transitioning from handwriting to typing his lab reports. It took time and lots of encouragement, but he succeeded. The introduction of the success analysis protocol on student performance provides the core of the development of how teachers interact with students and expectations to improve in those interactions and course expectations. In addition, the school provides training in Mind Science and its connection to Equity work. Mind Science study addresses mindset and implicit bias that teachers explore to becoming more mindful of their own prejudices and biases that infiltrate teaching and learning experiences. The success analysis is focused on improvement in struggling students’ progress and, through training, teachers develop an understanding of what factors may influence student success such as a student’s need to develop coping skills or overcoming discouragement or disappointment. Teachers shared that finding ways to demonstrate high expectations through student support and encouragement is worth the challenge of working with students who then start to believe in themselves.

- School leaders and staff communicate expectations to students and their families through regular communications via phone and email as well as a comprehensive handbook. This handbook includes expectations as to students’ daily attendance, academic and personal behaviors, as well as grading policies and resources for academic supports. Information as to school-based parent meetings as well as information sessions and celebrations of student successes hosted by the school’s partnering organizations is shared via phone calls and emails. Additionally, teachers use an online grading system to keep families constantly informed of their children’s academic progress. One parent reported, and all present agreed, that teachers help parents understand what their children are doing in school and how to help them succeed. Two Parent-Teacher Conferences are face-to-face and are regarded by parents to be opportunities to solidify progress of students and how parents can help. The diversity found in faculty means that staff are approachable, according to parents.
Findings
Feedback to teachers inconsistently captures strengths, challenges, and next steps and is beginning to support teacher development. School leaders are developing a system to use teacher observation data to more effectively design PD.

Impact
While feedback from observations to teachers is beginning to support teacher development, there are missed opportunities to offer actionable next-steps and to elevate school-wide instructional practices.

Supporting Evidence

- Classroom observation feedback is developing so that it can support teacher growth. An observation report evidenced feedback to a teacher on the importance of continuing to use mini-conferencing and an online math practice tool to assess student work during class so that the results can effectively inform on-the-spot instructional adjustments and future planning. A school leader advised another teacher to provide important information as part of the previous night’s homework, so students are more familiar with the content for the do now that follows, thus saving time explaining. Feedback for a science teacher suggested planning more strategic differentiation of all aspects of the lesson including additional supports of graphs and visual information for specific students who need this level of scaffolding. However, when a follow-up observation occurred, feedback did not mention the quality of differentiation as mentioned earlier but, addressed management issues around passing out materials needed for students to progress at a more independent rate, so students were not waiting for the next steps to begin. While some observation reports capture strengths and offer actionable next steps, there are missed opportunities to further support teachers on identified areas with follow-up observations.

- While observations are beginning to include actionable feedback, there are a variety of observation reports that contain feedback that is general, lacking actionable next-steps that support teacher growth. For example, one observation report indicated that a teacher earned the rating of effective in four domains of the Danielson Framework for Teaching. However, the school leader did not include any next steps that the teacher could use to improve practice in any of these areas. An April observation report of a math class feedback suggested thinking about next year’s curriculum map; identifying what additional supports can be offered to students who have been unsuccessful during class; and to continue reviewing data from multiple choice test-taking instruction to assess efficacy. Clear expectations for teacher practice that are timely, actionable and include prioritized foci continue to develop.

- School leaders are developing a system to use teacher observation data to effectively design and facilitate professional development (PD). The primary focus area of PD is the continuation of the Quality Teaching for English Learners (QTEL) program. According to school leaders, QTEL is a unique professional development initiative that provides educators with the tools they need to help all students achieve college and career-readiness in the 21st century. QTEL’s pedagogy is characterized by the following principles: high expectations, sustained academic rigor, quality teacher and student interactions, a focus on language and quality curricula. Teachers set professional learning goals and although QTEL is the main focus, there is limited evidence that teachers’ goals are directly reflective of this initiative. School leaders addressed QTEL as an important professional initiative that addressed several learning challenges with English as a New Language (ENL) students and students with disabilities. Though some goals overlap, there is not yet a formalized link between teacher observations and PD that supports teacher growth on identified goals throughout the year.
Findings

School leaders and faculty are in the process of aligning curricula to Common Core Learning Standards, content standards, and the instructional shifts. Rigorous habits and higher-order skills are inconsistently emphasized across curricula.

Impact

The lack of a coherent alignment with instructional shifts limits the accessibility of curricula for a variety of learners. In addition, inconsistency in rigor and higher-order thinking skills limits opportunities for students to demonstrate their thinking.

Supporting Evidence

- Although school leaders have created both a process for creating curriculum and a checklist for curriculum maps, there is no requirement for coherence or for integration of instructional shifts. A review of online documents for unit plans notes the listed expectations for format, but there is limited reference to standards and differentiation in actual unit plans. Lesson plans have no agreed upon expectations and represent a cross section of information in various formats. Learning objectives are written with limited examples of rigor such as completing a class quiz or an aim that states “Leveraging our course knowledge to prepare for the Earth Science lab practical,” thus missing opportunities for coherence. Although some unit plans and lesson plans evidence Common Core-alignment, there is uneven integration with the instructional shifts. Examples that demonstrate real-world connections occur in a grade-six social studies lesson plan, where students are tasked with stating evidence of either the culture that they belong to and/or the culture they have adopted as a real-world application. In another grade-six science class, the real-world connection was made with the content of food chains that was presented as a game so that students could complete a class quiz on adaptation and food chains.

- Curricula and academic tasks inconsistently emphasize rigorous habits and higher-order skills for English Language Learners (ELLs) and students with disabilities. Accommodations range from none, to general menus of possibilities, to specific small groups and individuals listed with strategies and approaches that would provide access with appropriate scaffold. As an example of rigor and higher-order thinking skills, grade-eight students are able to enroll in Regents-level courses, specifically in Earth Science, algebra, US history and Spanish. However, for most of the Regents courses, teachers create their own curricula. Since they are not adopting published curricula or programs, school leaders and teachers do not benefit from the alignment with Common Core that is found from using such programs.

- In some lesson plans, tasks are not differentiated for ELLs or students with disabilities and/or do not designate higher-order thinking skills. In English Language Arts (ELA), the main focus is one of literary studies based on novels that are integrated with social studies. An example in a grade-seven English lesson plan shows the balance between fiction and non-fiction as students explore Madelaine L'Engle's *A Wrinkle in Time* and the use of symbolism in the genre of science fiction, fantasy and the Cold War. The strategy of think, write, share, write is used as a way for students to process complex ideas in a sequential protocol that involves leveled texts, questions and the steps that include the student reading, thinking and writing, then sharing with table mates, and eventually writing a paragraph as the finishing piece. However, there were no modifications for students and all students completed the same task at the same pacing. As a result, not all opportunities are accessible to all students to demonstrate their thinking.
Additional Finding

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

Teaching strategies, including questioning and scaffolds, inconsistently provide multiple entry points into curricula. In some cases, there is limited student discussion and completion of student work products.

Impact

Uneven student engagement hinders high levels of student participation and thinking, including students’ ability to demonstrate higher-order thinking in discussions and work products.

Supporting Evidence

- In a grade-six math class, students engaged in Socratic seminar to discuss the text, *I am Malala*, by sitting in two smaller groups, each with students designated as a Question Master, a Participation Master and an Academic Vocabulary Master that included responsibilities such as leading the discussion, making sure everyone has participated, and holding students accountable for using evidence to support their claims and using accountable talk. All questions were student-written and created using Bloom’s Taxonomy from levels of analysis, synthesis, and evaluation. In addition, specific students who have behavioral challenges in each class had provisions for accommodations to be more successful in the seminar, such as encouragement to speak-up or noting the need to have directions repeated. Provisions were made for ELLs that included additional vocabulary support. While all students in this class participated and demonstrated higher-order thinking in both discussion and work products, this was not the case in a grade-six science class where the teacher led the entire class in a game that asked one student to respond at a time as the class explored adaptations and food chains. Most of the students were silent, listening to the teacher read off a descriptor that had the answer on a printed layout in front of each student. There was no discussion among students to decide on answers. No additional supports were noted and there was limited engagement. As a result, the majority of the class did not engage in the discussion and were unable to demonstrate higher-order thinking.

- In an integrated co-teaching (ICT) math class, a teacher-led whole-group lesson explored theoretical probability. Students struggled to understand an unclear task concerning probability. The teacher asked students to work in small groups in their journals or workbooks. The teacher continued to pose questions while checking in with small groups. While students worked in small groups, in most groups only one or two students contributed to the discussion. Student discussion reflected low levels of thinking with comments referring to asking each other to repeat the prompt or answering in one-word answers. Students also used whiteboards with very limited evidence of thinking and no discussions. Thus, the opportunity to development deeper understanding was limited. For students who finished earlier, they were handed cursive handwriting sheets to practice uppercase letters. The level of discourse and conversation was hindered by the lack of clarity in instruction and guidance, thereby reflecting uneven student thinking and participation.

- In a science class, students were placed in small groups, with one student leader each. These lead students read through the activity and its information to their group. When asked how often the class used this format, a student answered, “Once in a blue moon.” In another class, students were given many documents to process in small groups including political cartoons, charts, various quotes, and sections of primary written sources. Some groups were responsive to the task and others were hesitant and not involved. Small group instruction is seen in many classrooms, however in some cases a lack of structures and strategies limits participation and high-level thinking.
Additional Finding

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<tr>
<th>Quality Indicator:</th>
<th>2.2 Assessment</th>
<th>Rating:</th>
<th>Proficient</th>
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Findings

Teachers use common assessments to determine student progress toward goals with baselines, pre- and post-tests, and mock State assessments. Teachers use checks for understanding that include walkarounds, exit slips, do nows, and thumbs-up along with student self-assessment and reflection.

Impact

Results from common assessments, checks for understanding, and student self-assessments are effectively used to adjust curricula and instruction to meet students’ learning needs.

Supporting Evidence

- Teachers create common assessments such as quizzes, mid-terms, lab reports and finals to determine student progress toward goals across grades and subject areas. Analysis of this data is used to adjust curricula and instruction. For example, teachers use Mastery Connect, a web-based system that identifies student levels of understanding by targeting areas for personalized growth and gives teachers the data they need to direct each student’s learning, such as for groupings and for Individual Education Program (IEP) progress notes. As a result of the Regents Earth Science analysis, the weather unit has been repositioned in the scope for this school year to allow for more time and deeper focus. Furthermore, the formation of Response to Intervention (RtI) groups and classroom reteaching are based on data. In addition, an analysis of assessments in ELA showed gaps in the mastery of the Common Core revealing added support was needed in the use of inference in fiction and non-fiction texts. A redesign to emphasize inference in many contexts and genre was developed. Finally, daily in-class assessments and self-reflections are used to monitor progress. As a result, differentiation of instruction was determined by reading level, learning styles, and the use of individualized supplemental tools such as Delta Math, an online individualized practice program.

- Baseline assessments administered in fall 2018 were analyzed for each course in school, with results collated with the State result analysis that resulted in each teacher developing the most successful standards and the least successful standards for each class. Each teacher keeps track of these specific standards as the year progresses to determine the level of success students exhibit. In addition, there are Performance Series assessments in reading and math that everyone takes. As an example, grade-six students in math improved from 80 percent at or above grade level on the baseline in fall to 91 percent at the end of the year, an increase of 11 percentage points. This work is supported by teachers paying close attention to which standards students are succeeding in and which ones have been identified throughout the year as needing more strategic instruction.

- Teachers check for understanding in a variety of methods. The main strategy for teachers is to check-in with each partnership, small group, tablemates or individuals and reteach, revisit or bring in additional resources. They pause and ask questions while modeling at the beginning of a lesson. When there are two teachers in a class, often one teacher circulates around the room while the other checks-in with individual students. At the end of the lesson, teachers have students respond with exit tickets and student reflections. Some use thumbs up to assess quickly the direction of level of understanding is moving. Teachers stated that they use the information from exit slips to craft or modify or expand the next day’s lessons and to identify targeted students. Many students stated that the best way for them to learn is to have teachers explaining information, modeling procedures and clarifying language so that learning is more accessible. As one student stated, “If you see it, you can do it.” Another shared “Asking questions, helps me understand.”
### Additional Finding

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

The majority of teachers participate in structured, inquiry-based professional collaborations that promote school goals and the implementation of the Common Core. Teacher teams consistently analyze assessment data and student work for students they share or on whom they are focused.

#### Impact

The instructional capacity of teachers is strengthening through the analysis of student performance on Common Core standards. Improved teacher practice results in progress toward goals for students.

#### Supporting Evidence

- Teacher team inquiry-based professional collaborations are focused primarily on specific students who have not exhibited grade-level success yet. These teams meet weekly and record minutes that document their process and progress. In the beginning of the year, after an analysis of State assessment results from spring 2018, each teacher determined five specific Common Core standards with which their students were most successful and five that were the least successful. These are referred to as the top 5 and bottom 5 and guide instruction as it pertains for goals for groups of students. As an example, in the grade-six team meeting teachers used a short version of the Tuning Protocol to review one another’s top and bottom 5 standards based on mid-year assessment data. Teachers discussed ways to improve and standardize documentation of trends and needs with students. As a result of inquiry, team-targeted students showed improvement in reading on average gained 217 points and in math, they gained 47 points as noted in the Performance Series. Teachers instructional capacity improved as shown in a comparison of 2018 Advance scores in instruction and current ratings. There has been an increase in each component.

- In the grades seven and eight inquiry team meeting, an ELA teacher shared the standards review, which detailed inference as a related standard as one of the bottom 5. The teacher discussed the use of quizzes and QTEL activities to elicit inference-based responses. Group members discussed whether they have related issues with inferencing in their content areas. In a subsequent meeting, the teacher presented a lesson plan, student classwork, and student quiz submissions. This evidence was designed to highlight the alignment between the lesson plan, instructional goal/standard referring to inference, QTEL scaffolding provided, and a quiz as assessment. The tuning protocol was followed, with clarifying questions, feedback, reflections and debrief. Student improvement in reading where the inference focus existed, shows student progress increasing from 54 percent of students reading at levels 3 and 4 at the mid-year point to 70 percent by the end of May as measured by the Performance Series in reading. Teachers shared that they felt more confident and informed about designing lessons that had an inference emphasis and became more successful at teaching and recognizing opportunities to focus on inference.

- An observed teacher inquiry team used the Success Analysis Protocol to guide their meeting in which several students who had been focused upon were presented. Using this protocol, which focuses primarily on the skills and attitudes presented by each student, the team discussed positive improvement and movement each student has made this year. An example was one student who was described as taking more ownership of working independently. Now as the teacher reported when she checks in he does not need as much help. He finds details to develop. He uses the same organizer for six or so articles, needing help with the first two but working independently with the rest. In general, students are selecting appropriately challenging articles to read and effective supports. As a result, teachers expanded the use of organizers in their classes to continue to build ownership with all students.