Quality Review Report
2018-2019

M.S. M245 The Computer School
Junior High-Intermediate-Middle 03M245
100 West 77 Street
Manhattan
NY 10024

Principal: Henry Zymeck
Dates of Review:
January 29, 2019 - January 30, 2019

Lead Reviewer: Elsa Kortright-Torres
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. M245 The Computer School 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>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>To what extent does the school...</strong></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>Additional Finding</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>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
## School Culture

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

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Area of Celebration</th>
<th>Rating</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<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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</tbody>
</table>

## Systems for Improvement

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

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Area</th>
<th>Rating</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>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>Area of Focus</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Findings
The school’s approach to culture-building, discipline, and social-emotional support is informed by a theory of action. Structures are in place so that all students are known well by at least one adult who helps personalize supports.

Impact
Student-voice involvement has resulted in the creation of structures where students support each other. Student clubs and discussions about social emotional issues result in personalized supports for individual students that positively impact student behaviors.

Supporting Evidence

- School leaders and faculty establish a culture of inquiry by hosting an orientation for incoming students and an evening event for parents. Students and their parents are engaged in separate meetings during the evening event and are provided with a copy of *The Computer School Community Citizenship Matrix*. The matrix breaks down students’ behavioral expectations in their classrooms, hallways, lunchroom, auditorium, bathrooms, and on school trips. Students are immediately assigned summer reading which aligns with the school’s core beliefs of empowerment, resilience, and engagement. The book chosen for the year was *A Long Walk to Water*, by Linda Sue Park which is a true story and inspires perseverance. Students interviewed and all agreed that they feel safe and challenged to do their best in the school and that is because everyone understands behavioral expectations from the beginning of school. They added that the community matrix is integrated throughout the school.

- Students feel safe and included in meaningful decision-making through having their voices heard at All School Meetings (ASM). Through ASM and student government representatives, students meet on a monthly basis and collaboratively design and script thematic events and monthly rituals such as Words of Wisdom, Spirit Stick, and Students of the Month. Students lead the assembly and poll other students to make decisions that impact the school. Students also placed suggestion boxes throughout the school for students to express their concerns, make suggestions, and have their voices heard. Suggestions about Black History Month and selecting character traits to focus on such as *honesty* have been instrumental in building student to student relationships. Students created a skit from a movie about social justice because they felt that other students were being treated unfairly and presented it during ASM. Students stated that everyone, including teachers, embrace all students and their cultures. According to the Online Occurrence Reporting System (OORS) there has been a reduction in the number of serious incidents over the past three years.

- There are structures in place so that social-emotional supports are in place for individual students. Every Monday is considered Mindset Monday. Teachers conduct lessons about growth mindset versus fixed mindset during homeroom. These lessons evolved into Students Talking About Real Stuff (STARS). Generally, a quote is posted on the board and students have discussions about the meaning of the quotes. Teachers shared that this practice has created a sense of community in their classrooms. Guidance and advisement supports are available through an individualized approach where interventions are implemented after teachers identify and discuss the needs of students. For example, starting in grade six, parents participate in “listening conferences” where families come in and share any information that can impact learning for a child as the teacher listens. Notes are then shared with the team so that all are aware. This practice has resulted in providing students with appropriate interventions early in the school year. Students stated that they can rely on their teachers for help both academically and emotionally.
Area of Focus

| Quality Indicator: | 5.1 Monitoring and Revising Systems | Rating: | Proficient |

Findings

School leaders have a process that includes leadership meetings with lead teachers to regularly evaluate and adjust curricula, pedagogy, and assessment practices in response to student learning needs. School leaders and teachers have a process in place to review the quality of pedagogical practices.

Impact

Although school leaders and staff have protocols to monitor coherence and adjust systems and practices related to the Common Core Learning Standards, strategic monitoring of systems such as data tracking to increase coherence and make adjustments relative to the effectiveness of student groupings and resource allocation to increase student mastery are yet to be evident.

Supporting Evidence

- Through a collaborative process involving teacher leaders, teachers and school leaders, curricula are monitored and adjusted according to the needs of students. For example, there are weekly meetings held to ensure coherence of Common Core skills taught across grade spans. An adjustment that was made to ensure coherence of practices and rigor in curricula is that teachers meet by subjects and have mixed grade levels in their classes for English Language Arts (ELA), social studies, Science Technology Engineering Art and Mathematics (STEAM) and art for grades six and seven. School leaders shared that the rationale behind having a multi-grade level approach as well as Integrated Co-Teaching (ICT) classes is to increase the level of rigor while providing supports for students to reach higher standards. Another adjustment that was made was to ensure that students in math classes are heterogeneously grouped as opposed to being placed in homogenous groups to ensure that the curricula and pedagogical practices prepare all students to take Algebra and Earth Science Regents exams. However, data tracking across grades and subject areas have yet to strategically be refined to inform intentional adjustments around the school's targeted subgroups.

- School leaders strategically observe teachers by analyzing Advance data reports. Teachers also observe each other through an intervisitation process focused on rigorous instruction and components of Danielson Framework for Teaching. Intervisitations occur to allow teachers to observe best practices with particular attention to Danielson components around questioning and discussion techniques as well as around engaging students. Teachers shared that the process of intervisitations serve as embedded professional development (PD) as teachers learn from each other. For example, one teacher reflected and realized after conducting an intervisitation and seeing how the host teacher engaged her students in the lesson, that as a science department they should consider exploring the sequence of the units to allow for more student engagement. However, they have yet to create and use processes to evaluate the performance of students using assessments to monitor their progress toward mastery and thus ensure that they have the proper resources across grades and subject areas. In addition, thoughtful decision making has yet to be reflected in minutes and agendas or data monitoring systems on how the use of resource allocation has led to student mastery.

- Teachers meet as a department to ensure planning of rigorous lessons. In addition, teacher teams have worked on having coherence across subjects and grade levels. Adjustments have been made in grouping of students to ensure that there is exposure to rigorous material to prepare students to take Regents-level courses. Currently, students are programmed for mixed-leveled courses. However, there is not yet a process for monitoring how student programming using student work products and data in English, social studies and STEAM to gauge student mastery in meeting or exceeding the expectations of the Common Core.
Findings

Across grades and subjects, rigorous habits and higher-order skills are emphasized for all students, including English Language Learners (ELLs) and students with disabilities. Curricula and academic tasks purposefully integrate real-life applications and are aligned to the Common Core Learning Standards.

Impact

Emphasis on rigorous habits and higher-order skills require that all students demonstrate their thinking. Coherence across grades and subject areas promotes college and career readiness for all students.

Supporting Evidence

- School leaders and faculty ensure that the curricula integrate the Common Core and that there is strategic integration of the instructional shifts. The units of study for ELA incorporate real-life applications by reading authentic literature. For example, in a grade eight ELA unit, students are reading *The Tempest* by William Shakespeare. To learn about dialogue or incidents that propel characters to make decisions, students work in groups to study stillness, distance, and direction to discern characters’ actions, justify their analysis of their characters, and engage in a skit to demonstrate these actions. In a grade seven ELA lesson plan, students analyze and discuss their individual perspectives, choices, impact of their choices to make inferences about motivation and point of view of individuals. Students take notes about their point of view, word choices, explicit and implicit information to form their individual inferences to prepare for a Socratic seminar. Across grades, units such as these show coherence of integrating real-life applications and promoting student discourse and thus preparing students for college and careers.

- In a grade six math unit of study on ratios and proportions, students work on understanding the relationship between two quantities. To launch the unit, students watch a video to introduce them to vocabulary such as ratio, percent, unit rate, equivalent ratios, and conversion factor. Students apply their knowledge of ratios to solve problems such as finding the ratio of the students’ favorite flavor of gum. Students worked in groups to solve more difficult problems gradually. In a grade seven math unit, students also worked on proportions. Students worked in groups to solve word problems, justify their answers, and explain their rationale. In a grade six and seven social studies lesson plan, students are charged with identifying a non-sequitur fallacy. Students worked in groups to learn how the Supreme Court used the equal protection clause of the 14th Amendment to support segregation in the 1890’s. In a grade six science unit, students calculate the rate of speed and label with correct units, conduct a lab experiment, graph data, use a graphic organizer to demonstrate their thinking about segregation and discrimination in the 1900’s. In a Spanish unit, students are presented a video of a poem performed by an African-Peruvian activist to come up with adjectives and nouns that describe the meaning of the poem and to create their own song of empowerment or resistance. All students including ELLs and students with disabilities as well as low and high achieving students, have consistent access to cognitively engaging activities and demonstrate their thinking.

Curricula reflect activities that require all students to demonstrate their thinking. For example, in a grade eight ELA unit on *The Tempest*, ELLs and students with disabilities are engaged in creating a skit to show their understanding of the characters’ motivation, actions, and emotions. In a grade six and seven ICT social studies unit on the 14th Amendment students use a graphic organizer with visuals to demonstrate their thinking about segregation and discrimination in the 1900’s. In a grade six science unit of study on force, students use real objects to predict and calculate the rate of speed and label with correct units of measurement. All students will write a full lab report of their findings and results. In a Spanish unit, students are presented a video of a poem performed by an African-Peruvian activist to come up with adjectives and nouns that describe the meaning of the poem and to create their own song of empowerment or resistance. All students including ELLs and students with disabilities as well as low and high achieving students, have consistent access to cognitively engaging activities and demonstrate their thinking.
Findings
Across the vast majority of classrooms, practices align to the curricula and the Danielson *Framework for Teaching* and reflect a coherent set of beliefs that students learn best in a student-centered environment. Teachers facilitate student-to-student discourse about their work and students engage in self-reflection.

Impact
Students produce meaningful work products and engage in high levels of student thinking and participation. Across classrooms, students own their learning.

Supporting Evidence

- In the vast majority of classrooms, students engage in meaningful work that reflects the school’s belief that students learn best in student-centered environments. In a grade eight ELA lesson, the students are reading Shakespeare’s *The Tempest* and have partnered with a Lincoln Center Teaching (LCT) artist so that students create a skit as they study different characters and their choices. Students learn about physical choices when acting out a scene to convey the character’s emotions, motivation, and context. In a grade six math lesson, students engage in various activities according to their needs as they learn about ratios. Students worked on different tasks depending on their performance on a pre-assessment. Some students worked with manipulatives, some watched a video, while others received instruction from the teacher in a small group. Students produce meaningful work products as they engage in discussions and are taught using multi-modalities such as role playing, differentiated tasks, and small group instruction.

- In a grade six and seven ICT social studies class, students learn about the 14th Amendment. The teachers asked questions to promote thinking about equal rights and identifying non-sequitur fallacies. Students watched a video, analyzed a political cartoon, and answered questions in a graphic organizer. Teachers provided scaffolds like modified graphic organizers and examples to illustrate what “non-sequitur” means. Teachers also used a technology application to randomly select students to answer questions. In a grade six science class, the teacher provided time for students to formulate a hypothesis, identify independent and dependent variables, and to apply these to thinking about how the height of a ramp might affect the speed of a car. She circulated as students used a rubric to guide their learning and self-reflect. In another grade six math class, students worked independently on a warm-up problem and then in groups to solve real-life math problems about proportions. Pedagogical strategies such as these reflect coherence regarding the school’s belief that student learn best when they are provided with rigorous tasks and are engaged. As a result, students produce work products that they can relate to and apply.

- Across the vast majority of classrooms, students reflect on their learning in the moment. For example in a grade six science class, the teacher began the lesson by asking students to self-assess their knowledge about the previous lesson. Students used a skill tracker to check off whether they had a “firm grasp” or were “bit confused.” Students across classrooms are involved in high levels of thinking in both individual and group reflection. After reading a case study on ostracism, students analyzed and discussed perspective, choice, and impact of choices on incidents in the case study. Students were seated in groups and had high levels of discourse about the choices made and their impact. Selected students kept track of their evidence from the text as they discussed their findings. Students had robust conversations about feeling ostracized at some point in their own lives. In an art class on cubism, students worked at their own pace, used a rubric to self-assess and selected their next steps such as finding abstract resources, completing notes about abstract research, or working on improving their work after conferencing with the teacher. These opportunities promote ownership of student learning.
Findings

Across the vast majority of classrooms, teachers use assessments, rubrics, and grading policies that are aligned with curricula to give clear feedback to students to improve achievement. Assessment practices consistently reflect the varied use of ongoing checks for understanding and student self-assessment.

Impact

High quality assessment practices provide actionable and meaningful feedback to students and teachers regarding student achievement. Teachers’ assessment practices result in effective instructional adjustments during classroom instruction so that students are aware of their next steps.

Supporting Evidence

- Across the vast majority of classrooms, on bulletin boards, and student work products, there are checklists, rubrics, and grading policies that are aligned to the school’s curricula. For example, in ELA, teachers and students use Teachers College Reading and Writing Program-aligned rubrics or teacher-created rubrics that offer clear criteria for success. One student shared that after reading *The Dreamer* by Paul Munoz Ryan and writing an essay, the teacher provided feedback that the essay needed concise details. This feedback was provided during a conference with the student and the student used the rubric to understand next steps. Another student shared that after having an in-depth conversation with the teacher, he understood that the evidence needed to be connected to the theses. A grade six student shared that the teacher encouraged him to do an above-grade level prompt and was successful because the rubric stated exactly what was needed to achieve a high grade. Student work presented showed clear portrait of student mastery through the use of rubrics and actionable feedback.

- In a project on Exploring Linear Equations in Art, the teacher used a four-point rubric and added specific feedback to help the student understand what parts of the rubric the student needs to pay attention to move to the next level. In a rubric used for a final assessment after reading *Of Mice and Men* the teacher checked off the criteria the student met along with a checklist that provides feedback for the student to understand the requirements of the assignment. In a social studies assignment about the Westward Expansion, students are graded on writing a speech. The teacher used a four-point rubric and provided written feedback in the form of strengths and what the student can do to make the speech stronger. Report cards include narrative comments for each subject along with a four-point scale that represents levels from novice to advanced. Students shared that teachers provide feedback on an ongoing basis that helps them improve their work and apply it to other assignments thus making the feedback meaningful.

- Across the vast majority of classrooms teachers use conferring, questions, manipulatives, visuals, and demonstrations to gauge student understanding. In a grade six math class, students watched a video on ratios. After students were asked about what is part to part and part to whole, the teacher demonstrated by using cubes and drawing on the board. Students were able to continue as they stated “We need to divide by eight” and got the correct answer. In a grade eight math class, students were asked about order of operations to solve an equation. The teacher checked for understanding and demonstrated the order of operations to a group of students working at a station. A student shared that she would use another method of creating a long equation and then combine like terms. In a science class, students worked at their own pace to complete a lab and calculate the speed of a car depending on the height of a ramp. Students formulated a hypothesis and understood to look at the rubric to adjust their hypotheses. In an ELA class, a student was able to move on with next steps to justify the character’s choice and impact. The student stated that she needed to show the evidence to be ready for a Socratic seminar.
Additional Finding

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

Findings

The vast majority of teachers are engaged in inquiry-based collaborations in content and grade level teams. School leaders embed teacher leadership opportunities across the school.

Impact

Professional collaborations result in strengthened instructional capacity and increased student achievement. Teachers play an integral role in decisions that affect student learning across the school.

Supporting Evidence

- The vast majority of teachers are engaged in professional collaborations to plan lessons and units that promote the Common Core and result in schoolwide coherence. Teachers meet at least twice a week to collaborate on creating lessons and units that are standards-based and rigorous. Teacher teams meet as a grade and by subjects. A science team observed conducted inquiry work on analyzing grade six and seven student work labs and norming their use of a lab report rubric. Teachers discussed that the rubric had errors such as formatting with some of the ratings and needed to include words such as hypotheses and a section on accountability. Teachers decided that the rubric would be in the form of a checklist so that students can use it to ensure that they have covered all aspects of the assignment. Teachers also realized that student work reflected conceptual errors such as students not being able to distinguish between independent and dependent variables. Additionally, they concluded that students need to be reminded of using strategies such as the Restate, Answer, Cite evidence, and Explain (RACE) strategy to validate their claims. Teachers established that there needs to be more clarity in the rubric and in the graphic organizer and that students need to self-assess by highlighting and completing a self-reflection. Teacher team collaborations have resulted in coherence of implementing instructional strategies aligned to the Common Core.

- The social studies team created three goals for their grade six and seven students. Teachers measured progress of student work in content, concept, and writing through the use of a rubric. The purpose for creating the goals is to have consistency of instructional practices such as using the RACE strategy and to increase student achievement in benchmark assessments after each marking period. The team meets to align social studies units to the Common Core and to incorporate writing that demonstrate understanding of concepts, vocabulary, and textual evidence. During an interview with teachers, one stated and all agreed, that the work of teacher teams has created coherence in pedagogy especially in the use of the RACE strategy. Teachers have created coherence in using student models, anchor texts, and differentiating. Teachers shared and a review of student data confirmed that there has been increased in achievement of all learners as evident in state assessment data.

- Teachers lead different initiatives in the school, such as on teams focused rigorous instruction or student social emotional needs. In addition, there are opportunities for teachers to be grade-level team leaders. Teachers stated that through this structure, they have had an integral role in making decisions such as establishing and creating lessons for the STARS program. STARS allows for students to have conversations and build relationships using a protocol. Teachers are also leading content area teams and the PD team. Teachers have conducted PD on growth versus fixed mindset and on implementing student-led questioning during reading time. In addition, with partnerships such as LCT, teachers lead teams to embed the performing arts in core subject areas such as ELA. Teachers leading grade level and content teams, and incorporating partnerships such as LCT in ELA lessons, as well as the teacher created STARS program have led to instructional coherence and thus affected student learning across the school.