Quality Review Report

2018-2019

Community Action School - MS 258
Junior High-Intermediate-Middle 03M258
154 West 93 Street
Manhattan
NY 10025

Principal: Andrew Sullivan

Dates of Review:
February 14, 2019 - February 15, 2019

Lead Reviewer: Debra Tasioudis
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

Community Action School - MS 258 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>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>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>Area of Focus</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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</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>Additional Finding</td>
<td>Well Developed</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>Additional Finding</td>
<td>Well Developed</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

### 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>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>Proficient</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>
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</tbody>
</table>
Area of Celebration

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

Findings

The vast majority of teachers are engaged in structured, inquiry-based teams focused on coherence and improved student outcomes in the content areas. Distributive leadership structures abound.

Impact

There is schoolwide instructional coherence, increased student achievement and effective teacher leadership. Teachers lead instructional initiatives across the school that affect student learning.

Supporting Evidence

- All teachers engage in inquiry work on vertical content teams that result in instructional coherence across the grades in the content area, with a focus on ensuring consistency of practices and preparation for the Regents exam in math, or for the rigor of high school and college in the other content areas. During the review, the vertical math team was observed, focused on refining instruction and curricular resources from a review of student work connected to two Common Core standards, solving simple rational and radical equations in one variable, and giving examples of how extraneous solutions may arise. The student work reviewed also asked students to explain each step and construct a viable argument to justify a solution method, connected to one of the school’s goals. The team followed a protocol for looking at student work and reviewing the connected lesson plan. Teachers took notes on the standards addressed and skills needed, what the work demonstrated that students know and are able to do, surfaced gaps in student thinking and next instructional steps, including specific strategies and techniques to be implemented in a follow up lesson. The team's inquiry focuses on work for the school's lowest third. Online assessment data and interim assessment results shared for this group, and others demonstrate that there has been increases in student achievement in math across grades in solving equations and in students' ability to justify a solution method in writing, using a common rubric across the grades to show progress.

- The school also has a Collaborative Action Research Project (CARP) team, a teacher-led team focused on improving academic discussions and building students skills in a Common Core Speaking and Listening standard, the school's instructional focus. The team has built coherence in the use of a questioning and discussion protocol. The CARP team, also observed during the review, reviewed student work from an assessment presented by a teacher, how the strategy is currently being taught and needed adjustments. The team also tracks student progress for all students across classes through a common data collection tool used during discussions and to review student writing, that center on use of the protocol. Data demonstrates increased student achievement for all learners in participation and content in class discussions, and growth for all students within the argumentative writing unit in use of evidence to support claims.

- Distributive leadership structures are embedded across the school, so that teachers serve as grade leaders, and leaders of content area teams that shape the school's curriculum and instructional practices across the grades. Through the work of the CARP team, teachers not only shape class discussions across the grades and content areas by selecting and monitoring instructional practices connected to academic discourse across the school, but also defined the school's instructional focus, and serve as the leaders of tracking the school's progress in this area. Lead teachers also serve on a coaching team, consisting of teacher leaders of the math, content areas, literacy coaches, and school administrators. The team creates and delivers professional learning for teachers and evaluates curricula and instructional practices across the school.
Findings

Across classes, teachers use rubrics, performance tasks and online assessments aligned to the school’s curricula and help to determine student progress. Teachers consistently use ongoing checks for understanding and student self-assessment during lessons.

Impact

While assessments and rubrics are used to give actionable feedback and make adjustments to curricula and instruction, this does not always translate to meaningful feedback or allow for all students to demonstrate increased mastery. Students are not always aware of their next learning steps.

Supporting Evidence

- In a meeting with students, all students shared actionable feedback from teachers aligned to a rubric or clear next steps connected to the assignment. One student shared a math performance task. The teacher praised the student’s choice of problem solving strategy, and provided a next step to continue building out the student’s explanation to include a rationale for why they selected their strategy. Another student shared an essay written about *To Kill a Mockingbird* completed online, with actionable next steps from the teacher in the margins. This allowed the student to receive actionable feedback throughout the writing process, improving her writing. Students in the meeting shared that this online feedback as they work in the online platform is common across the grades and subjects. Teachers also keep office hours that students use as a time to get more comprehensive feedback on exams and assignments. As one student shared, this is a time when he can sit down with the social studies teacher, review his work, and look at the rubric step by step to better understand his next steps. Though office hours create a space for students to get this meaningful feedback, it is at the students’ discretion to decide whether to seek it.

- In teacher teams, teachers analyze common assessments, such as end-of-unit performance tasks and online assessments to make adjustments to curricula, such as the addition or removal of lessons, and adding or ensuring a focus on some vocabulary terms. A review of a literacy team’s work demonstrated changes to a seventh grade unit in response to a performance task used across the grade. Through analysis of results, the team identified that students were struggling to explain the context of evidence in their writing. The team came up with additional strategies for students to identify a series of steps in explaining evidence, and created additional lessons to provide students time to practice. A similar process of revision was seen in notes of teams and in units shared across the school’s content area teams. The school also uses common online assessments in ELA, math, science, and social studies to determine student progress and identify standards and skills for reteaching. Teachers also keep online gradebooks and use instructional reports from online learning platforms to determine student progress toward goals across grades and subjects.

- Across classes, teachers use checks for understanding, student self- and peer-assessment throughout the lessons. In most classes, teachers posed questions to the class, or to small groups of students to check for understanding and make adjustments for students. In a few classes, teachers used a mid-workshop or mid-discussion interruption to invite students to review the rubric criteria, as observed in math and science classes as students stopped the discussion to review the rubric. From these adjustments, students adjusted their questioning to prompt their peers to clarify their thinking. There were a few classes where students do not have the same clarity about the task’s criteria and thus students were not aware of their next learning steps.
Additional Finding

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<tr>
<th>Quality Indicator:</th>
<th>1.1 Curriculum</th>
<th>Rating:</th>
<th>Well Developed</th>
</tr>
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Findings
Curricula and tasks incorporate a focus on student discussion, text-based answers, argument, and real world problem solving. Units and tasks reflect planning and refinement for all students.

Impact
The curricula is accessible for all students and promotes college and career readiness.

Supporting Evidence

- There is a focus across all grades and subject areas on providing students with opportunities to engage in academic discussions that promote the use of text-based answers. To that end, this instructional shift, and the Common Core Speaking and Listening Standards are a part of all of the lessons and units. In a math lesson on translating inequalities included attention to math and speaking and listening standards, and included planned questions to promote student discussion based in the problem, such as, “What is the same and what is different in the task? How does this task relate to translating algebraic expressions?” Similarly, a social studies lesson on the Revolutionary War included reading and writing standards and historical thinking skills, with a focus on students analyzing primary sources to collaboratively explain historical phenomena, make inferences about historical figures, with an oral presentation of their findings. Tasks that purposefully plan for student collaboration and discussion are found across the curricula.

- In math tasks there is a focus on application in real world scenarios. In a math lesson plan, problems revolved around sneakers, reading time, and exercise, all opportunities for students to engage in real world problem solving. Similarly, a seventh grade lesson plan shared on writing and solving equations using inverse operations included problems about the amount of time teens spend online and determining sports scores with partially provided information. Curricular planning documents from the school’s vertical math team demonstrate tasks that engage students in real world problem solving with opportunities to engage in math talks are purposefully planned and common across the grades. Revised curricular maps for grades six through eight also demonstrate that the team ensures that there is vertical alignment of the Common Core standards and tasks necessary for students to be successful on the Algebra Regents exam offered to eighth grade students. The science team is also strategically revising the curricula across the grades to support the first group of students that will take the Living Environment Regents.

- Teacher teams use common assessments and student work to create unit modifications in ELA, math, social studies, and science units. A data analysis protocol sheet shared from a social studies team meeting demonstrates a review of what students know and are able to do, what gaps exist in demonstrated student thinking and instructional next steps for teachers such as adding cause and effect lessons, more explicit instruction in map reading skills and opportunities for students to make inferences from maps.

- Teachers also routinely plan lessons to include “must haves” and “amazings,” planned opportunities for differentiated levels of rigor so that all students, including highest-achieving students are cognitively engaged. In a poetry analysis lesson, the “must have” articulated the minimum requirements for student paragraphs, and the “amazing” added additional evidence requirements and a critique of the author’s perspective. Lesson plans shared specifically identified students that would complete one or the other, though the option to complete the “amazing” is made available to all students.
Additional Finding

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

Scaffolds, such as graphic organizers, vocabulary supports, anchor charts, and access to the thinking of peers provide multiple entry points for all students. Across classrooms, teachers facilitate whole class discussions and independent work.

Impact

All students are engaged in challenging tasks. Class discussions reflect high levels of thinking and participation.

Supporting Evidence

- Across classes, teachers use graphic organizers, anchor charts, mixed media representations of content, vocabulary supports, and constant access to the thinking of peers to provide students with entry points into the curricula. In a seventh grade math lesson, students working in small groups were observed relying on an anchor chart of an annotated math problem. Students took their work over to the chart to compare their work to the anchor, or to a model problem provided by a peer that was projected onto the board. Two students were observed debating their use of a fraction with how it was used in the model, and then revised their own work. In an ELA class, students used a graphic organizer to collect evidence to support their claim. Some students relied heavily on the organizer, using it to record their findings. Other groups used it as a discussion prompt, and then wrote their responses in paragraph format in their notebooks, using the scaffold as a prompt, rather than a note-taker, allowing them to demonstrate higher-order thinking skills as they transferred their ideas into an essay format. These opportunities for students to examine models, get access to the thinking of their peers through analysis of their work or discussion, and access to graphic organizers was common across classes.

- In an ELA class focused on student understanding of the structure of an argument, students engaged in a debate about the use of social media in schools. Inside the debate circle, students demonstrated high levels of thinking and participation in a student-centered discussion of evidence from various sources to advocate for or against the use of social media in school. The students outside the circle used a rubric to rate the arguments presented by students and included a rationale for their rating, also demonstrating high levels of student thinking in their written work products. Similarly, in a social studies lesson, students engaged in partnered discussions that generated high levels of student thinking and participation, as students strategized how they would use primary and secondary sources to answer questions, and then worked together to develop a single response that demonstrated their thinking. During this lesson, some pairs used the graphic organizer provided to organize their sources and thinking, while others wrote their responses in a longer format on loose-leaf paper.

- In a sixth-grade science class, students worked in small groups to describe the roles of different organelles in a system, and for some groups to also compare systems. The tasks for the groups, including the "must haves" and "amazings," included vocabulary supports and possible discussion questions were provided to students in a packet. This allowed groups to work at their own pace, use scaffolds as needed, and shape the complexity of the task as they saw fit, with minimal facilitation by the teacher. While the high levels of student discussion observed were common across classes, this level of student ownership of the task, criteria, and the direction of the group's work is not yet common across classes.
Additional Finding

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

Findings

School leaders and staff effectively communicate expectations and student progress to families. Advisory, student-led conferences, and purposeful guidance on using technology allows teachers teams to systematically communicate high expectations for all students.

Impact

Through constant online supports, school staff partners with families to support student progress. All students receive feedback that allows them to own their educational experience, so that students are prepared for the demands of high school, college and career.

Supporting Evidence

- School leaders and staff ensure that families receive frequent communications about their students’ progress, including online and mailed progress reports and report cards, as well as detailed progress reports for online reading and math programs that students work on both at school and at home. Families celebrate the online learning platform for reading and math as a way for parents to sit alongside their student as they engage in rigorous work at home, allowing parents to better understand the expectations in the classroom for Common Core-aligned reading and math skills. Parents praised the program for not only being a way for students to do extra work at home, but also having tutorials on content to help parents and students to better understand the subject matter. Students and parents alike shared that students set their own goals in the online learning platform, take quizzes and get to celebrate meeting their own goals at home. Parents also shared how teachers partner with parents to ensure student progress through the school's online grading and communication systems. A parent appreciated that the online grading system is updated daily, helping parents and students to keep an eye on progress.

- Several parents praised the availability and flexibility of teachers, who respond to emails quickly to explain homework assignments, or help students to make up missed assignments. As one parent shared, “The emphasis here on completing your work is strong. They really communicate when there is missing work. When my daughter’s grades started to slip, the teacher really supported me in fixing the problem, making sure she got extra practice on the academic work, and help in fitting in at school.” Parents of students with disabilities also shared that the teachers and related service providers at the school work with students and parents to ensure that students are receiving the appropriate supports, and are also learning to build independence in preparation for the rigor of high school.

- Teacher teams and staff create structures for students to take ownership of their learning through goal setting, student-led conferences, and student ownership of technology. Students lead conferences with families and teachers, providing an opportunity for students to talk about what they do well, what they need to improve on in their classes and report their progress toward goals set in their classes. Every student at the school has their own laptop, and manages their online classes with growing independence. As on college campuses, teachers hold office hours, so that students can seek teachers out on their own. Many students in the school use office hours to get one-on-one support from teachers and confer with teachers about their goals and progress in classes. Students also engage in advisory, which is tailored for eighth graders to provide personalized support for the high school application process and selection of schools. Guidance counselors also provide students with support and visit prospective high schools with students, so that students can make informed choices throughout the process.
Additional Finding

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<tr>
<th>Quality Indicator:</th>
<th>4.1 Teacher Support and Supervision</th>
<th>Rating:</th>
<th>Proficient</th>
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Findings

School leaders support the development of teachers with effective, accurate, and timely feedback and resources through cycles of observations aligned with the Danielson Framework for Teaching.

Impact

Feedback to teachers articulates clear expectations and promote professional growth to elevate schoolwide instructional practices, such as use of a scaffolding template.

Supporting Evidence

- *Advance* data shared on teacher observations reflect frequent observation of teachers by school leaders. A review of teacher observations also reflects feedback that offers specific, time-bound feedback to teachers. Teachers were offered clear strengths, such as strong collaboration with co-teachers, clear routines, and procedures for students, and effective use of self-assessment for students. In a meeting, teachers praised that the next steps provided by the principal and assistant principal are reasonable, manageable, and often things that they could implement the very next day. Next steps written out for teachers in observation reports also reflect clear, actionable next steps, such as, “As students are sharing their thinking, record or chart their responses.” Or, “Make sure to have a plan in place for early finishers in the lesson.”

- Teacher observation records also reflect schoolwide expectations for lesson planning, scaffolding, and differentiation of instruction. One observation that noted scaffolding as a next step for the teacher also included a template for planning for differentiation. A commonly shared tool, aligned with the schoolwide expectations, several teachers shared that the principal or assistant principal makes this template, as well as specific strategies for scaffolding learning, such as graphic organizers or vocabulary supports with teachers to help them to implement this as a next step. Teachers also engage in peer intervisitations that are focused on schoolwide or departmental instructional strategies. While this is not yet used as a time for teachers to give one another feedback and next steps that align to the Danielson Framework for Teaching, it does help to elevate schoolwide instructional practices across the school in aligning to instructional expectations.

- Teacher observations shared also demonstrate coherence from one observation to the next and acknowledge improvements in practice from one observation to the next. For one teacher, her areas of strength noted an effective lesson start up, strong student discussions, and student self- and peer-assessment. Her areas for growth were chart student responses in the discussion to support visual learners. This was similar to feedback provided in an observation by the assistant principal two months prior, where the teacher was encouraged to increase rigor by having students checking one another’s work, and demonstrates implementation of the next step and an increase in the teacher’s rating for assessing student learning. A review of the school’s Advance data demonstrates increases in teacher ratings from the previous year, specifically in planning and preparation and instruction, and ratings for teachers in all domains above the city average.