Quality Review Report

2018-2019

Battery Park City School
K-8 02M276
55 Battery Place
Manhattan
NY 10280

Principal: Theresa Ruyter

Dates of Review:
January 30, 2019 - January 31, 2019

Lead Reviewer: Kevin Bradley
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

Battery Park City School serves students in grade PK 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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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>To what extent does the school...</td>
<td></td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>1.1 Ensure engaging, rigorous, and coherent curricula in all subjects, accessible for a variety of learners and aligned to Common Core Learning Standards and/or content standards</td>
<td>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>Area of Focus</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>Well Developed</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
## School Culture

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

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<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>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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## 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>Additional Finding</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
## Area of Celebration

### Quality Indicator:

| 1.4 Positive Learning Environment | Rating: | Well Developed |

### Findings

The school’s approach to culture-building, discipline, and social-emotional support includes both academic and social-emotional learning. Structures are in place to know each student well and to personalize supports.

### Impact

There is a safe environment and inclusive culture that support progress toward the school's goals and positively impacts student behaviors. School leaders meaningfully involve student voice in decision-making to initiate, guide, and lead school improvement efforts.

### Supporting Evidence

- Students have a meaningful voice in school improvement plans. For example, the students are involved in student council, National Junior Honor Society, Gender and Sexuality Alliance (GSA), and the District 2 Student Leadership Council. Students from the GSA represented the school at the GSA Summit held in January at Stuyvesant High School that included workshops promoting respect, diversity and student voice. As a result, the students have brought to the school gender neutral bathrooms and cross-grade partnerships, such as community service, kindergarten students helping with morning announcements, and upper-grade students working with lower-grade students as book buddies. According to a student during the student meeting, “Yes, it is an inclusive place. I know that we feel very welcome in our community, with teachers and role models in the school. Our teachers are letting everyone share their ideas a lot.”

- The school goal of building a consistently positive school culture to combine academics and social-emotional learning through practices such as the school's racial equity work is evident. A school-based racial equity study group is focused on diversity and the experience of diverse learners within the school. This work has resulted in observations on who is being called on and where students are sitting to ensure equity of all learners within classrooms. Dean teams made up of grade bands, one for the elementary school and another for the middle school, meet weekly. During these meetings, the administration, dean, and counselors discuss how to support students who struggle with social emotional-learning and behaviors. Dean teams tracking behaviors, adult responses to behaviors, and communication to parents has resulted in a decrease in suspensions this year. Online Occurrence Reporting System (OORS) data from the same period last school year shows a decrease of suspensions, from twenty to nine. The results of the OORS data shows evidence of a safe environment and inclusive culture that positively impacts student behaviors.

- A variety of personalized structures are in place, including monthly meetings where teachers who know students well meet in teams to engage in kid talks. Kid talks are focused on personalized supports that uses a problem-solving protocol and an examination of student work and social-emotional needs to learn more about the students and how they can be supported at school. The school also has a Pupil Personnel Team (PPT) that meets as a multi-disciplinary team and discusses possible interventions to support students. Students are known well by teachers in advisory in sixth through eighth grades, which involves students keeping the same advisors for three years. Executive functioning skills result from weekly advisory lessons that reinforce academic and personal skills for students. Executive functioning skills outlined in advisory lessons include sustained attention, goal-directed persistence, time management, organization, and metacognition. As a result, the school’s social-emotional learning structures impacts students’ academic and personal behaviors.
Findings

Across classrooms, teaching strategies provided consistent use of multiple entry points for learners. Students produce meaningful work products.

Impact

Teaching practices engage students in appropriately challenging tasks, though strategic supports are not yet consistent. While student work products reflect high levels of student thinking, there are missed opportunities for student ownership.

Supporting Evidence

- During a first-grade reading lesson on sight words with stations, teachers worked with two different groups on guided reading. A paraprofessional was grouped with specific students for differentiated support. Students were able to describe what they were doing. During a third-grade math lesson, students shared ideas with the teacher about designing a math poster. Supports for English Language Learners (ELLs) were in place, such as students being provided the problem in their native language and conferring with ELL students to ensure clarity of task. The teacher handed out work from the previous lesson as a support and explained that this was how they were grouped. However, the students could not articulate how they were supposed to use the work from yesterday to move forward in the current lesson. One pair of students said they divided the five brownies into six parts and each person got a part of each brownie, but did not incorporate the math content. While scaffolds were provided to all partnerships based on student choice, the lesson lacked the use of strategic scaffolds to deepen student understanding of the content.

- During a kindergarten class on shared reading, one teacher worked with a group of fourteen students on the rug to identify the difference between voiced and unvoiced sounds. Another teacher worked with a group of five students doing shared reading and practicing spaces between the words. However, when students transitioned to cutting out words from a sentence frame, some students noted they were done and there were no extensions or instructions to prompt students to demonstrate their thinking. A second-grade math lesson included centers. There were different problems at different tables that focused on interacting with content, solving problems, and reflecting on the process and content. Task sheets were available to coach the students, though some students struggled due to lack of supports. Finally, during an eighth-grade writing lesson, students used their laptops and Google docs to write their essays. The teacher pulled a couple of students out to work with them. Some students had notebooks and resources available, however they were not strategically provided and evident in the vast majority of classrooms.

- During a fifth-grade Socratic seminar lesson, students were involved in a travel narrative seminar, with some students in an inner circle and some outside of the circle as observers. One student was the facilitator and prompted students with questions about the text. Some students had multiple opportunities to share during the lesson, though others were not heard from as consistently. A fishbowl seminar partner observation sheet was available to students; however, it was not being used by most students. During a seventh-grade math class that included a do now about ratios of juice and soda in a punch recipe, students sat in groups of three or four and had an opportunity to discuss with table partners. The teacher asked students to share their ideas about what they thought the answer was. While there were examples across classrooms of student work products and discussions reflecting high levels of student thinking and participation, some students did not participate in discussions or take opportunities to lead discussions, thus not demonstrating ownership during the lesson.
Findings

Curricula are aligned to Common Core Learning Standards and strategically integrate the instructional shifts. Rigorous habits and higher-order skills are coherently embedded in academic tasks.

Impact

Curricular alignment to the Common Core Learning Standards and instructional shifts results in coherence across grades and subject areas, promoting college and career readiness for all learners. Rigorous habits and higher-order skills require that all students demonstrate their thinking.

Supporting Evidence

- In addition to alignment to the Common Core Learning Standards and state content standards, school leaders and teachers produced curricular documents that evidence coherence across content areas and grade levels. Lesson plans and unit plans reflect strategic integration of the instructional shifts embedded across content areas. For example, lesson plans in English Language Arts (ELA) emphasize the balance between information and literary texts as found in a first-grade lesson plan on using non-fiction text features to determine main idea and supporting details of a section of a non-fiction book. This strategic integration across grade levels and content areas is focused on promoting college and career readiness for all students by building their skill sets in informational texts connected across content area learning. Math instructional shifts of fluency and application build content skills across grade levels such as those found in a seventh-grade math lesson plan, that has students analyzing proportional relationships using a variety of strategies and models. Curricula coherence across content areas is evident in standardized unit plans across content areas that follow the Universal Design for Learning (UDL) model.

- A review of curricular documents revealed academic tasks that emphasize higher-order skills for all students. A third-grade math lesson plan includes students labeling an equal share as a fraction of the whole. A second-grade math lesson plan asks students to integrate math routines and number sense into everyday math routines. A fifth-grade ELA lesson plan asks students to challenge assumptions and bias by asking if they can judge a person’s character based on what they see with their eyes. Lesson plans include modifications for students with Individualized Education Plans (IEPs), including the use of differentiated texts based on level and choice and graphic organizers. Lesson plans involving ELLs include the use of key vocabulary words and definitions and visuals so ELLs are able to demonstrate their thinking according to the same high-level standards expected of all students. Finally, Spanish as a foreign language is embedded across the curriculum for first through eighth graders.

- Lesson plans challenge all students to utilize rigorous habits in the course of instruction. Big ideas and understandings statements in lesson plans include, from a fourth-grade reading lesson, “To identify the perspective in a fiction story and analyze how the author’s choice of perspective affects the story.” High-level essential questions are emphasized in detail in curricular documents. Examples of higher-order essential questions found in curricular documents include “How do we identify and evaluate central themes in literature?” from an eighth-grade ELA unit plan, “What is the relationship between the cross-multiplication algorithm and proportional reasoning?” from a seventh-grade math unit plan, and “What is cultural diffusion and how does it impact our everyday lives?” from a sixth-grade social studies unit plan. As a result, coherence across grades and subject areas appears through big ideas and understandings, essential questions, vocabulary, and assessment emphasized in curricula planning documents.
Findings

Across the vast majority of classrooms, teachers use or create assessments, rubrics, and grading policies that are aligned with the school’s curricula and offer a clear portrait of student mastery. In addition, the school uses common assessments to create a clear picture of student progress toward goals across grades and subjects.

Impact

High quality assessment practices provide actionable and meaningful feedback to students and teachers regarding student achievement. All students, including ELLs and students with disabilities, demonstrate increased mastery.

Supporting Evidence

- Across the vast majority of classrooms, teachers use or create assessments that result in offering a clear portrait of student mastery. For example, the grading system is standardized across the elementary grades and the middle school grades. The kindergarten through fifth grade grading policy is four for significantly exceeds grade level standards, three for meets grade level standards, two for approaching grade level expectations with assistance, and one for well below standards even with assistance cannot meet grade level expectations. For grades six through eight, meets standards, approaches standards, falls below standards, and no evidence (work not turned in) are aligned to a pre-determined percentage range in order to accommodate the number of grades that students need for high school applications. The standardized grading system is reflected in assessments and rubrics across each segment of the school, showing evidence of a clear portrait of student mastery tracking through multiple assessment structures.

- Across the vast majority of classrooms, samples of student work products showed teacher-written actionable and meaningful feedback directing students to the steps they should take to strengthen their work. For example, feedback on an ELA assignment included “Next time make sure to include a strong ending. Think about using action language or a feeling that would make it a good ending,” and on a math assignment a teacher wrote “Your alternate strategy of decomposing according to place value to compare numbers was a great way to check. Next time you need to justify and explain your reasoning using mathematical terms.” A student reported, “Every assignment we get back includes feedback about what we need to work. For example, to improve my counterclaim, my teacher gave a checklist that had three sections, one for us, another for a peer, and a third for our teacher’s feedback.”

- Common assessments include Fountas and Pinnell running records for reading and Teachers College Reading and Writing Program (TCRWP) learning progressions for writing. Across grade levels, formal reading assessments take place in early fall, mid-winter and late spring. Writing assessments in ELA, social studies and science includes learning progressions from TCRWP as a guide for rubrics and for determining next steps for student writing. There are benchmarks for narrative, opinion, and informational writing. The progressions provide a standardized benchmark for assessing student skill and help guide planning for next instructional steps. Data is collected in both formal and informal methods and used to plan for instruction, to group students for group work and small group instruction, and to determine if additional support is needed. The school’s math intervention teacher and reading intervention teachers use assessment data to create groups, and to match students to the type of intervention needed. Intervention data shows mastery of goals for groups of students through increases in students’ reading levels.
Additional Finding

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Quality Indicator:</th>
<th>3.4 High Expectations</th>
<th>Rating:</th>
<th>Well Developed</th>
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Findings
School leaders consistently communicate high expectations to staff and students and offer support. Teacher teams and staff establish a culture for learning that systematically communicates unified high expectations for all students.

Impact
Communication and professional development around high expectations results in a culture of mutual accountability. A culture for learning through clear, focused, and effective feedback is established so that students are prepared for the next level.

Supporting Evidence

- Content-area and grade-level lead teachers create mutual accountability among teams by leading meetings with specific outcomes tied to all participants having responsibility for the shared schoolwide goal of increasing student achievement. Mutual accountability is evident in teachers and teacher teams participating in EdCamps, professional development designed for staff to propose and lead sessions for their colleagues with a focus on collaboration. For example, the staff lead sessions on co-teaching, data, differentiation, diversity, social-emotional learning, and executive functioning. A teacher shared about EdCamps, “We presented our work and shared resources, staff got to choose whenever they went. It took my work to another level and you’re going to be more strongly accountable for that work now I’m sharing it.”

- School leaders consistently communicate high expectations for teaching and learning through regular professional development (PD) trainings around best practices aligned to the Danielson Framework for Teaching and observation feedback. Professional growth is ensured through participation in various PD sessions during the year, including topics such as addressing issues of bias; focusing on accessible, engaging and challenging instruction for each student; and strengthening the social emotional program, as well as specific training sessions on the Danielson Framework for Teaching components aligned to schoolwide goals. PD sessions include surveys assessing the experience to give feedback that school leaders use to guide decisions for future PD sessions to support teachers’ specific needs. As a result, training supports staff in their ability to meet communicated high expectations.

- All students, including students with IEPs and ELLs, benefit from frequent feedback and guidance in which students receive individualized supports. There is an expectation that all students will enter the next level of their education with high school credits. For example, all 8th graders take Algebra I and Living Environment Regents exams. Middle school math curriculum has been redesigned so that all students have the content needed for successful completion of Algebra I. In addition, Spanish as a foreign language is offered to students beginning in first grade through all grade levels and eighth graders can opt to take an Advanced Spanish Elective which culminates in the Language Other Than English (LOTE) proficiency exam. A departmentalized fifth grade communicates high expectations preparing students for their next level of education in middle school with increased independence and responsibility as students become accustomed to traveling to different teachers to receive specific content area instruction. The school also offers a graduation with distinction option in academics, athletics, arts or service and involves an application portfolio. Next-level readiness is evident in the 92 percent of eighth grade students who earned high school credit in 2018, an increase of 54 percent from 2017. This included a 30 percent increase over comparable schools and a 59 percent increase over the city average in 2018.
Findings

The vast majority of teachers are engaged in inquiry-based, structured professional collaborations. Across the school, grade teams meet on a consistent basis to analyze assessment data, student work products, and to share teaching strategies.

Impact

Teacher engagement in inquiry-based, structured professional collaborations has strengthened their instructional capacity and promoted implementation of the Common Core Learning Standards. Systematic analysis of student data and work products has resulted in mastery of goals for groups of students.

Supporting Evidence

- All teachers are engaged in weekly structured teacher team meetings. During a fourth-grade inquiry team meeting, teachers analyzed student thinking in reading. The team reviewed outcomes from the prior team meeting and the focus student moved up reading levels from level Q to T as a result of outcomes from their previous meeting. The objective was planning for differentiation to support reading behaviors. They reviewed two student work examples, including recent reader’s notebook responses. Implications for instruction back in the classroom was to keep the same theme of friendship and see if the student can apply it to another assignment. Support discussed was a graphic organizer for theme and a thinking chart to chart thinking. A teacher shared about how the work of the teacher team has strengthened teacher instructional capacity and promoted Common Core Learning Standards, “We learn from each other strategies that have worked, taking what somebody else has done with success in their class by sharing resources. While we’re teaching the same content as we try to teach the same big ideas and concepts, our work as a team is helpful, because we’re going to each other rooms to support with model lessons to showcase specific strategies.”

- An inquiry team focused on struggling readers is led by a staff developer from the Teachers College Inclusive Classrooms Project (TCICP). The team has been tracking three different students from three different teachers. The team reviewed assessment results, identified areas of need, and next steps. A seventh-grade student was assessed with Fountas and Pinnell assessments and a reading notebook with weekly reading responses. The areas of need for this student were determining importance in a text and understanding the reading response. Next steps for this student included reassessing with a lower reading level, teaching reading for main idea and chunking a text to monitor for meaning. A sixth-grade student had a 99 percent accuracy in the Fountas and Pinnell assessment, but was identified with reading stamina issues and recognizing character emotions. Next steps involved assessing at the next reading level and conducting a funds of knowledge assessment to get an idea of genre interests. The work of teacher teams includes looking at classroom practice along with student data.

- Mastery of goals for groups of students is evident in 85 to 94 percent of all kindergarten through fourth grade students, who received Reading Recovery interventions as identified by teacher teams, and moved up at least one reading level based on assessments comparing growth from the beginning of the school year. 100 percent of students with IEPs in kindergarten, first, and fourth grades moved up at least one reading level based on reading interventions since the beginning of the school year. 70 to 100 percent of ELLs in kindergarten, third, fourth, and eighth grades moved up at least one reading level from the beginning of the school year until the midpoint of the school year based on interventions and supports outlined as a result of the collaborative work of the school’s teacher teams through Reading Recovery.