Quality Review Report

2018-2019

M.S. 297
Junior High-Intermediate-Middle 02M297
75 Morton Street
Manhattan
NY 10014

Principal: Jacqueline Getz

Dates of Review:
November 14, 2018 - November 15, 2018

Lead Reviewer: Robin Posner
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. 297 serves students in grade 6 through grade 7. 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>To what extent does the school...</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>Proficient</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1.2 Develop teacher pedagogy from a coherent set of beliefs about how students learn best that is informed by the instructional shifts and Danielson Framework for Teaching, aligned to the curricula, engaging, and meets the needs of all learners so that all students produce meaningful work products</td>
<td>Additional Finding</td>
<td>Proficient</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2.2 Align assessments to curricula, use on-going assessment and grading practices, and analyze information on student learning outcomes to adjust instructional decisions at the team and classroom levels</td>
<td>Area of Focus</td>
<td>Proficient</td>
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</tbody>
</table>
### School Quality Ratings continued

#### School Culture

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>To what extent does the school...</th>
<th>Area</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>
<td>Well Developed</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3.4 Establish a culture for learning that communicates high expectations to staff, students and families, and provide supports to achieve those expectations</td>
<td>Additional Finding</td>
<td>Well Developed</td>
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#### Systems for Improvement

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<thead>
<tr>
<th>To what extent does the school...</th>
<th>Area</th>
<th>Rating</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1.3 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>
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<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>
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<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>Proficient</td>
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</tbody>
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Area of Celebration

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Quality Indicator:</th>
<th>1.4 Positive Learning Environment</th>
<th>Rating:</th>
<th>Well Developed</th>
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</table>

Findings

A highly supportive and extended family culture is evident throughout the school. There is a nurturing and personal learning climate with effective social and emotional structures in place.

Impact

Students are adopting effective academic and personal behaviors and student voice is meaningfully involved in school improvement efforts.

Supporting Evidence

- Across all grades and throughout each classroom, a warm and nurturing environment is apparent. All staff members respect students and families and this was confirmed in the conversations conducted with parents and students. All adults, including school leaders, demonstrate positive rapport with students and know almost all students by name. Both parents and students believe that school leaders and staff care deeply about the students and have high expectations for them. For example, students shared work products and were eager to explain how the support they receive from their teachers helps them to be a better student. Students also shared that they have several adults that they can go to if they need help, whether it involves academic or social-emotional support which helps progress towards meeting the school goal of knowing the story of each child.

- The mantra of the school is the incorporation of a safe and healthy learning environment for all students. The principal shared the belief that treating students kindly and with respect fosters confidence and comfort with taking risks. Students stated that they enjoy coming to school and feel safe. They feel they can speak to any adult in the building. Student opinion is taken seriously. Student Council meetings are a venue for students to help guide the shaping of the school. Students spoke to a recycling effort they are putting into place, along with improving school spirit via fundraisers and spirit days. Students took the initiative in year one of the school to advocate for a particular project-based learning project in their social studies classes. They met with teachers and school leaders and it was quickly put into place. Students were also given a voice regarding teacher placement for year two of the school via a feedback tool on which they indicated if the teacher was a good fit for the grade and subject and should move up to the next grade with the student cohort. School leaders took this feedback seriously and, as a result, a teacher was kept in a grade that students and leaders agreed was a good fit.

- The school has structures in place to ensure that students’ social-emotional learning needs are met. The guidance counselors, deans, and teachers work as a team to support students’ social-emotional needs through an advisory program that has a restorative justice and social-emotional curriculum as its center. This enables students to learn language and vocabulary cues to help them express their feelings, frustrations and learn how to complement each other. Students shared that their advisors know them personally and are like their school moms or dads. Students further shared that on Fridays, each individual student works with an advisor to create an individual plan for anything that might need to improve. Teachers and guidance staff facilitate various workshops to support and partner with parents to aid in academic and social-emotional achievement. The school has extensive after-school programs that include both academic and enrichment programs. Parents readily share their satisfaction with the school’s administration and faculty. Students are welcomed warmly in the morning and throughout the day by both teachers and school leadership reminding them of the communal inclusivity of their school.
Area of Focus

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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

Across classrooms, teachers use and create assessments, rubrics, and grading policies that are aligned with the school's curricula. In addition, teachers' assessment practices including exit tickets reflect the varied use of ongoing checks for understanding.

Impact

Staff provide actionable feedback to students and teachers regarding student progress so that effective adjustments are made to teacher practice in order to meet the needs of all students. However, there is inconsistent evidence of providing students with next steps so they are aware of them.

Supporting Evidence

- In some, but not all classrooms, teachers use rubrics to assess student work. For example, a rubric used across classrooms includes criteria for exceeds expectations, meets expectations and not yet meets expectations. Feedback to a student included, “Great work, next time try editing more. There are some places where punctuation was left out.” Other feedback included, “Reread and proofread”, and “well-written but please address run-on sentences and some grammar issues.” Feedback was clearly evident; however, the next steps of how to specifically improve the writing were not clear for students to understand.

- Students came to a quick consensus when reporting on the use of assessments and rubrics with regard to written assignments and clarity around students’ attainment of mastery. When they receive rubrics with comments that include written feedback with next steps from teachers, students shared that this feedback helps them meet the learning target on their next assignment, as well as exceed it. One student reported that he will use the feedback for other writing assignments. An example of teacher feedback on English Language Arts (ELA) work reads “To move a story along, you must use dialogue which will develop characters and story elements.” Another example reads “Next time I would like to see you use stronger transition phrases to show the passage of time.” However, students shared that they do not get feedback from all teachers and on all assignments resulting in students being unsure of how they could work towards meeting or exceeding learning targets or what their next learning steps are in all subjects.

- In most classes, students were grouped based on assessment data along with data from teacher-developed exit tickets. In a grade-seven math class, students were partnered based on data resulting from a running record earlier in the week. Teachers review the exit tickets each day and make adjustments to the next day’s lesson plans and student groupings based upon the analysis of the exit tickets.
Additional Finding

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

School leaders and faculty ensure that the curricula are aligned to Common Core Learning Standards and identified subskills, and lesson plans integrate academic and content vocabulary across grades and content areas. Across lessons, guiding and focus questions emphasize higher-order skills and provide opportunities for students to write from sources and provide text-based answers.

Impact

Thoughtful curricular decisions build coherence and promote college and career readiness in unit and lesson plans across grades and content areas. Thought-provoking academic tasks are accessible to all students.

Supporting Evidence

- School leaders and faculty ensure that all unit and lesson plans are aligned to Common Core Learning Standards and selected learning targets. Learning targets align to instructional shifts in ELA and math and include balancing informational and literary texts, text-based answers, writing from sources, academic vocabulary and deep understanding of math concepts. Across lesson plans reviewed, teachers align their learning objectives to identified standards, learning targets and the corresponding grade-level subskills. For example, a chemistry lesson states that students will be able to differentiate between monomers and polymers by creating and comparing different models. This lesson includes a list of subskills that require students to develop and use models to predict and describe phenomena and develop models to describe phenomena and mechanisms that cannot be seen.

- Across grades and content areas, teachers use a school-wide lesson plan template that includes plans to introduce key vocabulary. Across lesson plans reviewed, teachers identify tiered academic and content-specific vocabulary. A math lesson includes Tier II vocabulary words which include demonstrating, model, observation, justify, valid, summarize and evaluate. This lesson also includes Tier III vocabulary specific to the study of integers and fractions including negative, positive, absolute value, opposite, ratio, numerator, denominator, mixed number, improper fraction and least common denominator.

- Across unit and lesson plans, faculty plan guiding and focus questions to engage students in critical-thinking activities and provide them with opportunities to share their thinking. A social studies lesson plan includes the guiding question, “Does love influence human behavior?” This lesson also includes the focus question, “How did the church benefit and harm people in Medieval Europe?” In this lesson, the teacher plans for students to independently read and annotate an article, participate in a class share and then engage in evidence-based, small-group discussions using a Text Rendering Protocol that requires students to select and cite text evidence. Across lessons reviewed, teachers plan scaffolds to support all students, including English Language Learners (ELLs) and students with disabilities, in writing from sources and providing text-based answers.
## Additional Finding

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

Teaching strategies align with a set of beliefs about how students learn best and provide entry points through the use of scaffolds.

### Impact

Students are engaged in tasks that require high levels of thinking and discussion, including Socratic seminar, leading to the development of meaningful work products across classrooms.

### Supporting Evidence

- The instructional priorities for all classes include a focus on small groups, student-to-student conversation, learning targets and feedback. Most of these adopted priorities were evident throughout classes and provide students with opportunities to produce meaningful work. In a grade-six ELA class, students were working on creating memorable leads in their writing. Students worked in pairs and triads to review different types of memorable leads and make a plan for which two types they would try during the writing workshop. As pairs shared, they were asked to explain why they were going to try a particular type of lead. In a grade-six science lesson, students worked in a small group to sort cards with different energy events on them. There were 16 cards of varying levels of difficulty. The teacher pre-selected eight cards to give to each student group, based on the ability level of the groups. Each group then self-selected five events to analyze and then record data on a graphic organizer.

- Across classrooms, students were arranged in pairs, triads or small groups to promote discussion and critical thinking, often strategically to support the needs of individual learner literacy competency. In a grade-six social studies class, students were placed into a group to use the Socratic seminar format to determine why historical theories change over time. Students had to work together to find and cite specific evidence from a variety of texts including articles and other historical documents. The students engaged in this critical-thinking discussion purposefully knowing that it was an instructional focus expected of them as communicated by the teacher. Students were placed together in groups to do the pre-work that included text-based research so that each group included either ELLs or students with disabilities so that all students could have the benefit of having rich discussions with peers around a challenging task.

- Multiple entry points enable learner access to the material. During a grade-six math lesson on integers and fractions, students were divided into three groups and provided scaffolds that included teacher support, manipulatives and online programs that allowed each student to reach the same goal of mastery along different paths. In a grade-seven social studies lesson on the church during medieval times, students were given different variations of texts at stations so that each student had access to the materials at their instructional level. During a grade-seven ELA lesson, students were given individual goals by their teacher and asked to analyze the goal and make a plan for meeting it. When completed, students were given must do’s and may do’s that were scaffolded to student needs.
## Additional Finding

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<th>Quality Indicator:</th>
<th>3.4 High Expectations</th>
<th>Rating:</th>
<th>Well Developed</th>
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### Findings

School leaders and staff systematically emphasize high expectations for professionalism and academic excellence to the entire school community. The school partners with families to communicate expectations for college and career readiness.

### Impact

Communication structures ensure a high level of trust and mutual accountability between administration and staff. Parents support students in achieving school goals for their success.

### Supporting Evidence

- School leaders share high expectations through a staff handbook that details guidelines for all aspects of instruction including advisory, classroom management, learning outcomes, and mastery grading. Additionally, memoranda detail staff holding high expectations for all students while providing high levels of support, knowing and understanding that not all students are ready at all points and that every student should be given every opportunity to succeed. All staff and school leaders get together in a two-day yearly retreat where time is spent writing individual mission and vision statements that support the school goals. Additional time is spent during weekly professional development to review individual and school goals. There is also a weekly email to all staff members so that everyone is current on what will be happening that week.

- Teachers hold each other accountable for high instructional expectations through their collaborative common-planning sessions. Teachers spoke about relying on each other to give support to each other when presenting during planning sessions. Teams also assign different tasks to a variety of team members and must subsequently fulfill their responsibilities to each other in promptly attending to those tasks and bringing the results of their work to the next planning session. Additionally, teachers hold school leaders accountable to provide them with the professional development and tools they need to support students successfully as well as to be transparent and receptive to feedback. Teachers shared that the principal's Monday emails highlight what is happening and they are encouraged to respond in person or via email with feedback and comments. They further shared that the principal is a big advocate of creating an environment in which both leaders and teachers can try various strategies and if they do not work, it is both expected and safe to express opinions and input about why it is not working and who is responsible for how to make it work.

- The school effectively communicates with students and parents around high expectations towards college and career. Parents and students shared that students will go on to competitive high schools and colleges. Parents stated that the school helps them in meeting these goals by providing support via workshops and the help that will be provided for the high school process beginning in January. Parents praised the school’s communication of expectations and stated they always know how their children are performing and what needs to be done to meet or exceed their goals. One parent stated, and all present agreed, “This school provides us with a roadmap to college for our individual child starting in sixth grade. They ensure we know and understand what the school is doing, and what we need to be doing, to ensure our students are ready for high school and beyond.” Parents also spoke about student-led conferences and how they feel that is fostering the independence of their students and ensuring they are taking ownership of their own learning. School leadership and staff communicate in an ongoing fashion with parents via an online grading system, emails, and newsletters from advisors, memos, and the school website. All parents agreed that the turnaround time for responding to their emails is phenomenal. All parents present agreed that the school leadership valued the ideas of families and often implemented their ideas such as ways to engage parents and working towards building a community through events like family dinners.
**Additional Finding**

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

The majority of teachers are engaged in structured, inquiry-based professional collaborations arranged in grade bands. There are many opportunities in place for teachers to be leaders within the school.

**Impact**

Inquiry collaborations led by teacher facilitators have strengthened instructional capacity and the promotion of school goals. Distributed leadership opportunities have provided teachers a voice in key decisions that affect their personal growth and student learning.

**Supporting Evidence**

- Content-area teachers meet weekly to discuss student work and create new goals to improve their instructional delivery. Teams use an inquiry protocol. Observation of the math teacher team demonstrated an established routine focused on reviewing student work samples from low, medium and high students. Each teacher provided noticings based on three student work samples to identify patterns and trends. Through discussion, teachers identified several actionable next steps to improve their instruction including providing students exemplars of tables and alternate ways to problem solve in order to expand student thinking about showing their work in a variety of ways. Additionally, teachers stated a need to continue reviewing the rubrics throughout the unit to further ensure student understanding of the expectations.

- Minutes from a variety of cross-curricular, grade-band bungalow meetings highlight an initiative on student-focused research in which teachers discuss students across content areas and through different lenses. Each bungalow chooses one student to focus on for a cycle, getting to know their individual story including achievement across curricular areas, how they respond to intervention, how feedback has an impact on them with the goal of creating a student profile for each student thus, helping teachers design coherent curricula that spiral through the grades and results in increased student achievement for all students. Teachers noted that this intentional review of grade-six students across curricular areas last year has helped them effectively plan targeted interventions and enrichments for grade seven. They also noted that continuing this for both sixth and seventh graders will ensure coherence and alignment when they implement eighth-grade curricula next year.

- Teachers are provided many opportunities to experience professional development at their discretion and take on leadership roles. Professional developers are hired based on observed needs as well as teacher-expressed needs. Teachers work directly with the staff developers to guide their own professional learning. Additionally, teachers are sent as liaisons to district-level leadership conferences that help them support and oversee their departments. Leaders shared, and teachers concurred, that teachers’ individual areas of expertise are always welcomed and utilized. Leaders shared that teachers with an expertise in writing a parent handbook were leading the charge on creating that document. Teachers with an expertise in advisory helped create the current structures for their advisory program. One teacher shared, “I used to be an operations director before I came here and was responsible for teacher and student programming. When leadership learned about this, they came right to me to drive creating the master schedule for this year.” Another teacher shared that she had been trained in restorative practices and school leaders have given her a position of leadership in rolling out that initiative across the school.