Quality Review Report

2018-2019

I.S. 125 Thom J. McCann Woodside
Junior High-Intermediate-Middle 24Q125
46-02 47 Avenue
Queens
NY 11377

Principal: Judy Mittler

Dates of Review:
January 23, 2019 - January 24, 2019

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

I.S. 125 Thom J. McCann Woodside 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 Danielsen 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>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>Area of Celebration</td>
<td>Well Developed</td>
</tr>
</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>Additional Finding</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>
</tr>
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#### Systems for Improvement

<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>1.3 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>Well Developed</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>Well Developed</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4.2 Engage in structured professional collaborations on teams using an inquiry approach that promotes shared leadership and focuses on improved student learning</td>
<td>Additional Finding</td>
<td>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>Well Developed</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Area of Celebration

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Quality Indicator:</th>
<th>2.2 Assessment</th>
<th>Rating:</th>
<th>Well Developed</th>
</tr>
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</table>

Findings

Across classrooms, teacher-created rubrics and assessments offer a clear portrait of student mastery. Classroom assessment practices including turn and talks, exit tickets and student-to-student discussions are ongoing, varied, and tailored to student needs and goals.

Impact

Teachers and students receive actionable and meaningful feedback. Assessment practices result in effective adjustments that meet student learning needs and students are aware of their next learning steps.

Supporting Evidence

- A review of student work and meetings with teachers and students revealed that feedback on student work includes next steps across subjects. Comments on an English Language Arts (ELA) task provided students with positive feedback and next steps. One teacher noted, “I like how you used a letter format and included a personal connection for a hook. Next time remember to include the book title and author so your readers can make the connection.” On a math assignment, the teacher offered the following next steps, “Your data is inaccurate in some locations leading you to the wrong answer. Make sure you go back and ensure your data is correctly placed throughout the problem.” A student shared that she had gotten feedback on staying on topic in her writing. At their next conference, the teacher worked with her on how to work on this, stating, “Since this conference, I always keep this in my mind when I’m writing not only for English Language Arts but across all subjects.” Students and staff shared that after receiving feedback, work can be resubmitted multiple times to be graded again. Student work reviewed showed evidence of original work and resubmitted work, each step indicating teacher feedback, student feedback, and student reflections.

- Across the school, students use rubrics and checklists as tools for peer and self-assessment across core content areas. The grade six reading comprehension skill self-tracker includes statements such as “I’m an expert!” and “I am somewhat unclear about this skill.” Students are then asked to give themselves next steps to master the skill. A peer editing assessment for student presentations required students to evaluate their peers on content knowledge, organization, visual appeal, and voice. Students needed to also give specific feedback or ask clarifying questions designed to support their peers. Sentence starter prompts were available to support students creating questions and feedback.

- In all classrooms, teachers consistently check for understanding using turn and talks, exit slips, student writing, and student discussion. Teachers use this data to drive changes needed in grouping and instruction, as well as to drive student conferences for goal setting. Each student meets with the teacher quarterly to work on core-curricular goals and next steps that the teachers continually monitor via daily checks for understanding, formal assessments, and informal conferences in class. Students are well aware of their goals and shared that their next steps and goals are in their portfolios. Students meet with teachers to determine ways they can meet or extend their goals if needed. Students shared that goals are often tiered, allowing students to work to meet a goal or to even exceed it.
Area of Focus

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Quality Indicator:</th>
<th>1.2 Pedagogy</th>
<th>Rating:</th>
<th>Well Developed</th>
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Findings

Across the vast majority of classrooms, teaching practices are aligned to the curricula, reflecting a coherent set of beliefs that students learn best when presented with opportunities to engage in productive struggle and have time for collaboration and discussion with peers. Across the same classrooms, teaching strategies strategically provide multiple entry points and high-quality supports, discussed at the team and school levels.

Impact

While teaching practices across the vast majority of classroom reflect school beliefs that include time for meaningful discussion, there are occasionally missed opportunities to deepen student-to-student discussion. Work products for all learners, including English Language Learners (ELLs) and students with disabilities, show evidence of engagement in challenging tasks and the demonstration of higher-order thinking skills.

Supporting Evidence

- In a sixth-grade math lesson, students grappled with converting measurement from centimeters to meters. The teacher told students that someone can roll an object 301 centimeters and asked students to determine if this was more or less than three meters. Students worked to solve the problem and then engaged in a turn and talk to discuss with a partner how he/she solved the problem. Students then shared their thinking in their table group and came up with one strategy to share with the class. In a seventh grade math classroom, students worked in pairs to solve a problem before the mini-lesson. Students shared that they were using different strategies to determine if the solution was correct. Thus, teaching practices reflect a coherent set of beliefs that was consistently reflected across classrooms so that all students produce meaningful work products, as understanding of content is achieved through collaboration.

- During an eighth-grade literacy lesson, students discussed character traits and how characters changed throughout a text. Students were grouped according to their reading level and provided with specific discussion prompts for their groups. In one group a student shared that the character was very moral and cited evidence from the text to support her response, a skill aligned to the instructional shifts. Additionally, all students engaged in discussions around their texts. The teacher also provided one small group with an additional mini-lesson on the spot. However, in another eighth-grade literacy classroom, while students were provided with a similar structure, there was a missed opportunity to deepen student discourse. Students were asked to brainstorm alone and then share-out with the whole group. Although teaching teams across the school believe in student-to-student collaboration and discussion, the structure of this share-out did not allow all students to engage in a discussion that fostered a sharing of their ideas with peers.

- During an ELA lesson for a self-contained class that included ELLs, students were placed in groups based on their independent reading level and pre-assessment. Each group was focused on writing a short response to a text-based question. Students were assigned roles to ensure everyone had a chance to participate in the discussion and collaborate with peers. Each group focused on building academic and conversational language and forming sentences as appropriate to the level of the group. Each group had appropriate supports such as sentence frames, large paper, and colored pencils that allowed all students to engage with the same complex text. Across all classrooms, teachers provided similar structures and supports to meet each student's learning needs. Additionally, across all grades, students have toolkits that contain different supports such as graphic organizers, individual word lists, and math manipulatives that students use as needed. Across all classrooms a menu of high quality extensions existed that students were able to choose from as work was completed.
Findings

School leaders and faculty ensure that curricula are aligned to the Common Core Learning Standards and strategically integrate the instructional shifts. Curricula and academic tasks are planned and refined using student work and data.

Impact

Integration of the instructional shifts has ensured that students are acquiring academic vocabulary, using text-based evidence, and demonstrating a deep understanding of math content. All students have access to the curricula and are cognitively engaged through differentiated groupings and leveled materials.

Supporting Evidence

- Across the vast majority of curricula, there is alignment with the Common Core. Additionally, there is evidence of the integration of the instructional shifts resulting in coherence and the promotion of college and career readiness. For example, academic vocabulary and the requirement that students support written arguments with text-based evidence are addressed uniformly across curricula. A unit plan for grade seven for the book *A Long Walk to Water* asks students to use text-based evidence to compare and contrast two characters within the story. Another group was asked to use text-based evidence from *The Outsiders* to draw a conclusion about how race and socio-economic status determine the path characters' lives take. In math unit plans there is evidence of the academic shifts for fluency, application, and deep understanding. In grade six unit plans, students are expected to deeply understand concepts like division and multiplication of decimals and include the academic vocabulary that the students will need for that unit.

- A review of curricular materials evidences a variety of modified support tools as well as a menu of extensions that students can self-select. Multiple lesson plans included entrance and exit slips and a variety of graphic organizers aligned to the specific academic task. A grade seven unit plan included organizing students to meet student needs based on assessment data including the entry and exit slips. This plan included the teacher organizing students for the day based upon students' selection of an answer to a multiple choice question. One group of students would be working with the teacher, while the other students would work independently grouped by their selected answer. The groups had differentiated activities to complete and were able to self-select extension activities. Each group would work independently and the teacher would meet with each group during the lesson period.

- Lesson plans from all observed classes showed evidence of teachers' planning for the cognitive engagement of all students. Lessons included group practice with differentiated groups, ensuring that students of all levels had access to meaningful work assignments ensuring cognitive engagement. In an ELA unit plan opportunities were provided to build more fluency as ELL students were given a narrative chart with steps to help support the writing of a constructed response with two pieces of text-based evidence. In a science unit plan, ELLs and students with disabilities were given opportunities to present their thinking via diagrams, and other forms of multimedia.
Additional Finding

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

Findings

School leaders and staff systematically emphasize high expectations for professionalism and academic excellence to the entire school community. The school successfully partners with families to ensure there is an established culture for learning that challenges students and communicates expectations for their academic achievement.

Impact

The culture that exists in the school results in the demonstration and expression of student ownership of their educational experiences, as well as preparedness for college and careers. Communication structures ensure a high level of trust and mutual accountability between administration and staff.

Supporting Evidence

- Leadership conducts frequent classroom observations with feedback based on Danielson’s *Framework for Teaching* that contains specific language from the rubric, evidence from the classroom observation that supports the rating, and actionable next steps. These are then addressed in subsequent classroom observations noting clear expectations for pedagogical improvement. In addition, teachers receive a staff handbook that reviews areas of schoolwide focus such as project-based learning, book clubs, co-teaching, growth mindset, and other school priorities. A professional development calendar makes clear that school leaders support teachers in their understanding of expectations in addressing topics such as questioning and discussion as instructional strategies, vertical inquiry, and social-emotional learning. Teachers hold each other mutually accountable to instructional expectations by supporting each other in common-planning and inquiry. Teachers participate in ongoing teacher intervisitations that showcase what is going on in classrooms. Teachers and leaders shared that coverage is always provided for intervisitations and feedback sessions, thus resulting in a sense of mutual accountability.

- School leaders and staff effectively communicate expectations to families via a planner, email, parent engagement Tuesdays and a variety of robust online platforms. Parents feel strongly that they are partners with the school to support their children and help ensure student readiness for high school and beyond. A parent stated that “the school staff has helped my student plan, prepare and be ready for their high school experience.” Guidance counselors and the parent coordinator provide workshops to parents on the online communication applications, attendance, curriculum, and social-emotional health of adolescents. Parents stated that they feel welcomed and supported by teachers and leaders.

- High expectations for students includes the collaborative development of instructional goals every quarter by teachers and students, so that students are able to own their educational experience through a clear understanding of how they can be successful. Students shared goals having to do with passing classes, meeting certain grade requirements, and improving the time spent at home on studying and school work. The school’s numerous activities for all students, including guidance/advisement support their development with the appropriate tools to succeed in high school and beyond. Rigorous coursework including Regents’ courses in math, science, history, foreign language, and ELA, as well as numerous art, music, and drama classes are offered. Students also reported that the rubrics and feedback the teachers give on their work helps them know what they need to do not only to improve their work but also to be successful at the next level. One student commented, “Feedback from my teacher always includes why I need to do something and how it will help me be successful in high school and college.”
Additional Finding

| Quality Indicator: | 4.1 Teacher Support and Supervision | Rating:     | Well Developed |

Findings

School leaders support teacher development with effective feedback that accurately captures strengths, challenges, and next steps from strategic, frequent, formal, and informal classroom observation cycles and analysis of student data.

Impact

As a result, support practices that articulate clear expectations are having a positive impact on teacher capacity and strengthening instruction across the school that is aligned with professional goals for teachers.

Supporting Evidence

- Classroom observations for new and experienced teachers are frequent and strategic. All of the assistant principals are subject area specialists who supervise within their area of expertise. The principal cycles through all subject areas so that she and the assistant principals can be normed. Reports provide meaningful and actionable feedback to teachers. For example, one observation report includes feedback to ensure that the turn and talk strategy is used as part of the do-now to provide opportunities for all students to speak and share. Another report detailed the need to ensure mini-lessons are kept shorter to allow time for the student work period. One teacher reported that due to feedback offered by a school leader, she has been working on being more specific in her planning, including noting higher-level thinking questions as prompts for student-to-student discussions throughout the lesson. As a result, student participation in share-outs has increased and there is an improvement in understanding as evidenced on formative assessments and teacher notes taken during independent work. Teachers and school leaders shared that student data and work are reviewed as part of both the pre- and post-observation conferences. Teachers also receive feedback from peers from a series of informal and formal intervisitations.

- In addition, there are examples of observation reports that reinforce feedback offered in earlier reports. For example, one observation report includes feedback indicating that the teacher should have students expand on one word or fragmented responses. A future report complimented the teacher for not only having students expand on their own answers but build on each other’s answers as well. In another report, a teacher is advised to provide students with presentation guidelines that include specific roles and prompts as well as the assessment criteria for the task. A later report compliments the teacher for implementing these strategies to ensure that all students share ideas and information effectively.

- Besides the reports resulting from official classroom observations, there are emails and in-person conversations that follow informal classroom visits that contain commendations and recommendations. One teacher shared that she was provided with specific strategies to try out in her class. A review of the email confirmed that not only was a strategy given, but resources were also shared, including a colleague who could be visited to see this specific strategy in action. Another teacher shared that a school leader noticed that there was not a lot of participation in her classroom and gave her advice on embedding strategies such as turn and talk and conversation stems into her lessons to ensure students were given regular opportunities to talk to each other and share out during the class. The teacher reported that she, “reflected a lot on the advice and has since implemented it.” This resulted in a much more successful rating on the Danielson Framework for Teaching, component 3C - Engaging students in learning, as evidenced on her last written observation report. A review of observation reports shows evidence that teachers meet regularly with leadership to discuss progress towards meeting professional goals. Teachers also reported that the verbal feedback they receive after formal and informal observations is aligned with their goals.
Additional Finding

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

Findings

All teachers are engaged in professional collaborations aligned to school goals. Opportunities are embedded to empower teachers to assume leadership roles that directly impact key decisions across the school.

Impact

The work of teacher teams has resulted in school-wide instructional coherence, as well as improvements to pedagogy, student work, and progress for all learners. Shared leadership structures result in teachers effectively being involved in building capacity to improve student learning.

Supporting Evidence

- Horizontal and vertical teacher teams meet and work collaboratively to ensure that units of study continue to address the Common Core Learning Standards and instructional shifts. Teams also analyze student work, establish small group plans, and revise units and assessments. Professional learning opportunities focusing on analyzing student work, assessment data, rigorous questioning, and student engagement are provided for teachers each week. The school implements a professional learning model that utilizes a school-created protocol that is coherent across teams. Teachers meet in core subject teams and examine both quantitative and qualitative data, examine student work and share best practices. One example of core subject team collaboration is the analysis of student work from collaboratively created writing performance tasks. The team developed a performance task and rubric, which was administered to their classes. They then normed the student work, analyzed trends and patterns and created a plan of action to address student need. This data was also used to inform the planning of writing units. A later performance task shows evidence of improvement for all students on using text-based evidence.

- The varied and effective teacher teams found in the school allow for distributive leadership. They exemplify the collaboration that takes place between administration and staff. The School Leadership Team, Core Inquiry Team, Special Education Inquiry Team, grade level teams, and core subject teams are led by teachers and impact learning for all students including creating professional development strategies that are turn-keyed to the entire school, the purchase and/or creation of classroom materials and the revision of curricula. There are two teachers who also serve as collaborative coaches for individual teachers. The Core Inquiry Team comprised of subject and grade team leaders meet together with the administrative team weekly to create and set goals for the school in both curricula and social emotional learning. Teachers affirmed that they play an integral role in key decisions and stated that their perceptions and findings are taken into consideration.

- Teachers stated that communication is continually taking place as a result of the teacher team learning culture. They enjoy working together and sharing information. They shared that one of the most effective forms of professional development is visiting classrooms to look at environments and to observe colleagues. Teachers regularly visit classes independently. One teacher stated, “I can learn from my colleagues during team meetings and intervisitations.” Another teacher stated, “We have learned so much about reading and writing through sharing information and strategies across grades.”