Quality Review Report

2018-2019

I.S. 145 Joseph Pulitzer
Junior High-Intermediate-Middle 30Q145

33-34 80 Street
Queens
NY 11372

Principal: Ivan Rodriguez

Dates of Review:
March 28, 2019 - March 29, 2019

Lead Reviewer: Lisa Reiter
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


School Quality Ratings

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Instructional Core</th>
<th>Area</th>
<th>Rating</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>To what extent does the school...</strong></td>
<td></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>Area of Focus</td>
<td>Proficient</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2.2 Align assessments to curricula, use ongoing 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>Proficient</td>
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</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></td>
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<tr>
<td>1.4</td>
<td>Maintain a culture of mutual trust and positive attitudes that supports the academic and personal growth of students and adults</td>
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<tr>
<td>3.4</td>
<td>Establish a culture for learning that communicates high expectations to staff, students and families, and provide supports to achieve those expectations</td>
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## Systems for Improvement

*To what extent does the school...*

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<tr>
<th>Area</th>
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<tr>
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<tr>
<td>1.3</td>
<td>Make strategic organizational decisions to support the school’s instructional goals and meet student learning needs, as evidenced by meaningful student work products</td>
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<tr>
<td>3.1</td>
<td>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>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4.1</td>
<td>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>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4.2</td>
<td>Engage in structured professional collaborations on teams using an inquiry approach that promotes shared leadership and focuses on improved student learning</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5.1</td>
<td>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>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Findings

The vast majority of teachers are engaged in inquiry-based, structured professional collaborations such as vertical and horizontal teams. Distributed leadership structures, such as a teacher leadership team, are embedded across the school.

Impact

Collaborations within teacher teams strengthen teachers’ instructional capacity resulting in coherence and improved student achievement. Teacher leaders play an integral role in key decisions that affect student learning across the school.

Supporting Evidence

- All teachers serve on vertical and grade-level teams that meet regularly. Teams follow a protocol to look at student work and gain insights and perspectives on teaching and learning. For example, a grade-six team focused on enhancing student literacy skills through extended writing and developing reading comprehension skills in all content areas. After reviewing student writing, they determined that some students struggled to organize their writing and were not using transitional phrases. The team introduced a graphic organizer and an additional resource of transitional phrases. As a result, written responses improved across all content areas. One teacher shared that his students are consistently using transitional phrases in their writing. Additionally, a review of teacher team minutes reveals that the team also focused on building students’ reading comprehension skills through analyzing text and using context clues. One teacher shared that they focused on building language across the content through annotation strategies. Thus, the implementation of common interventions led to 66 percent of students on this grade-six team increasing their reading level by at least fifteen Lexile points during the first half of the year.

- One teacher shared, and all agreed, that their instructional practices had been positively impacted through participation on inquiry-based teams. One teacher shared that her practice has been strengthened with feedback she received as a result of presenting student work at team meeting. She incorporated more scaffolds such as graphic organizer for struggling students. As another example, one teacher shared that her team adopted a “hamburger graphic organizer” that she introduced to support students’ writing. Another teacher shared that a grade-eight team noticed that some students were not yet able to cite and explain the textual evidence in their writing. The team decided to introduce a new strategy called “Yes Ma’am” which guides students to cite evidence from the author and include their explanation or opinion. The teacher shared that this led to an improvement in student writing. Therefore, professional collaborations strengthen teacher instructional capacity and promote coherence.

- Ten teacher leaders meet weekly to review student work and lesson plans and to offer next steps. For example, after reviewing a lesson plan, teacher leaders identified a gap in the content objective and the task students were asked to complete. Teachers agreed that this was an issue noticed on lesson plans across grade and content areas. The teacher leadership team then developed a professional development session to support colleagues and improve student performance. Teacher leaders regularly facilitate professional development for their colleagues that is implemented into their practice such as flip classroom, various discussion protocols, and different online platforms. Furthermore, teacher leaders serve as model teachers and peer collaborative teachers to support their colleagues in decisions that affect student learning across the school. For example, to support the school’s focus on building literacy skills across the classroom, model and peer collaborative teachers have created a schedule of when they are teaching a certain skill so that other teachers may observe that practice.
Area of Focus

| Quality Indicator: | 1.2 Pedagogy | Rating: | Proficient |

Findings

Across classrooms, teaching practices are aligned to the curricula and reflect the articulated belief that students learn best when engaged in a workshop model, are provided with opportunities for discussions, and make real-world connections. While teaching strategies consistently provide multiple entry points into the curricula, there are missed opportunities to provide high-quality supports and extensions.

Impact

In some cases, misaligned teaching practices limit opportunities for all students to consistently produce meaningful work products. Missed opportunities to provide high-quality supports and extensions prevents some students from consistently demonstrating higher-order thinking.

Supporting Evidence

- Across classrooms, teachers used the workshop model to engage students in real-world problems and discussions. In a grade-seven math classroom, after a mini-lesson, students worked in groups to determine the experimental probability of simple events occurring. Students conducted various experiments such as flipping a coin or pulling a colored block from a bag fifty times and then determined the probability of the event occurring one thousand times. During a grade-eight English Language Arts (ELA) class, students engaged in a debate on whether or not everyone is entitled to a trial. Students cited textual evidence to support their claim and built upon each other’s responses. However, in a grade-six ELA class, after students wrote their responses to an assigned question, they were directed to assess a partner’s response. Students did not have the opportunity to first discuss their responses with a partner or later as a group. Thus it was unclear how effective students were at assessing another’s response. Therefore, while across classrooms teaching practices reflect the articulated belief on how students learn best, there are occasionally missed opportunities to engage students in meaningful tasks.

- During a grade-eight science class, students discussed the results of the previous day’s experiment that required students to use different tools as bird beaks to learn about survival. One student shared that she thought her paper clip beak would have been unsuccessful, but she survived. Another student shared that he survived because other students’ beaks did not allow them to get enough food. Students then engaged in another round of survival in which they competed for bird seed with their beaks. In some classrooms, though, there were missed opportunities to engage students in meaningful tasks or discussions. As an example, in a grade-six math classroom, part of the opening task included students solving two problems and creating a third problem with a partner. Three students were then asked to write their answers on the board and explain how they solved the problem. While the students shared, some students continued working independently, thus missing an opportunity to hear a peer explanation and then engage in class discussion.

- Across classrooms, teaching strategies consistently provide multiple entry points into the curricula. As an example, in a grade-six co-taught classroom, students analyzed song lyrics using different task cards. Students were provided with sentence starters for questions that were not multiple choice. Additionally, some students had questions identified as challenge questions. In a grade-seven math class, students had different real-world problems to complete. The problems varied in complexity. Across classrooms, students also had access to anchor charts, notes, and word walls to support their learning. However, there were missed opportunities to provide high-quality supports and extensions for all learners. As an example, in a grade-seven ELA classroom, students worked in groups to analyze quotes from a shared text. However, all students completed the same task, and additional supports or extensions were not provided.
Additional Finding

<table>
<thead>
<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 curricula are aligned to the Common Core Learning Standards and the instructional shifts with an emphasis on writing from sources across content areas. Curricula and tasks are planned and refined using student work and data.

Impact

Decisions about curricula build coherence and promote college and career readiness for all students. Faculty members adjust curricula so that a diversity of learners, including English Language Learners (ELLs) and students with disabilities, have access to cognitively engaging tasks.

Supporting Evidence

- Curricular documents across grades evidence consistent alignment with the Common Core and the integration of the math instructional shifts. For example, in a grade-seven math lesson plan, students demonstrate a deep understanding of probability by completing multi-step real-world problems. A grade-eight lesson plan includes problems that require students to apply their deep understanding of scatter plots to real-world situations. As an example, students will predict the average maximum daily temperate in January at a latitude of fifty degrees by using data to create a scatter plot. A review of the math pacing calendars reveals the instructional shift of coherence by spiraling the curriculum. For example, in grade-six students learn about statistics and box plots. In grade-seven, students learning is extended to include central tendency and box and whisker plots. Students in grade-eight deepen their understanding of statistics through scatter plots.

- Curricular documents across content areas and grades reveal evidence of ELA instructional shifts. A review of the ELA pacing calendar reveals that there is a balance of informational and literary texts across grades. Additionally, there is evidence of citing textual evidence from sources across content areas. In a grade-six lesson plan, students use text-based responses to support their claims on Emperor Qin Shi Huang’s reason for creating terracotta soldiers. Furthermore, lesson plans consistently include academic vocabulary such as significance, unification, and infrastructure. Therefore, curricula promote skills such as using academic language and text-based responses that promote college and career readiness for all students.

- Lesson plans evidence support for a diversity of learners, including ELLs and students with disabilities. Teachers use reading levels and classroom assessment data to identify supports for students. A grade-six integrated co-teaching (ICT) ELA lesson plan indicates that some students will have questions labeled as challenges which indicates they do not need to complete those more challenging questions unless they have time. Additionally, the lesson plan indicates students receive sentence starters and additional teacher support. Furthermore, the lesson plan includes that if students finish early, they have a choice board in their notebook of additional activities. A grade-eight science lesson plan includes that students will be provided with sentence starters. Also, some questions may be altered for students who perform at a lower level. While some lesson plans include supports for students at different levels, this practice is not consistent across all grade levels and content areas. For example, while a grade-eight ELA lesson plan includes supports for ELLs such as sentence starters and mixed ability grouping, it does not include high-quality supports or extensions for all students. Therefore, lesson plans consistently reflect planning and refinement of tasks to support a variety of learners; however, individual or group support or extensions are not yet consistently evident across curricular documents.
Additional Finding

Findings
Across classrooms, teachers use rubrics that are aligned with the curricula. Teachers’ assessment practices, such as conferencing and whole-group questioning, consistently reflect ongoing checks for understanding and student self-assessment.

Impact
Teachers provide students with actionable feedback. Additionally, teachers make effective adjustments to instruction to ensure all students’ needs are being met.

Supporting Evidence

- Across classrooms, samples of student work products showed teacher-written actionable feedback. Feedback to students on math tasks guides students to use math vocabulary and to check their work. Feedback on literacy tasks includes, “Focus on subject and verb agreement and extending sentences,” “Use vocabulary words and make connections between the activity and the real world,” and “Further analyze evidence and explain how each piece of evidence supports the challenges faced.” A grade-six student shared that the rubric indicates he provided multiple examples and his next step was to explain his evidence more thoroughly. Additionally, evidence of the use of rubrics by teachers and students across grades was evident on hallway bulletin boards, classroom displays, and in student work portfolios.

- One student reported, and all present agreed, that the feedback given by their teachers has a direct impact on their work. A grade-seven student shared that she received feedback to use more details in her writing. She said, “In my next essay, I made sure I added more details which is why I got a higher score.” Another student shared that the next steps help him understand what to do on the next assignment. He said, “On my next essay, I will check my quotes to make sure they are relevant to the claim.” Thus, actionable feedback across grades and subjects positively impacts student performance.

- Teachers continually check for understanding through conference and whole-group questioning and make adjustments according to those assessments. For example, in a grade-seven science class, after conferencing with a few students, the teacher paused the lesson to discuss the difference between chemical and physical reactions. After clarifying that physical properties do not have to be reversible and asking a few students also to explain the difference, the students returned to their tasks. Additionally, in a grade-six classroom after circulating through the room, the teacher adjusted the lesson by reminding students to use their tools if they were struggling. Students then began using their tools to complete the task rather than waiting for a teacher to assist them. Additionally, students use rubrics and checklists as self-assessment tools that support their learning needs. One student shared that they use checklists to evaluate their writing, as well as that of their peers. Additionally, one student shared that in some classes they are required to write a reflection about their next steps. Therefore, teachers’ make effective adjustments to meet students’ learning needs.
Additional Finding

| Quality Indicator: | 3.4 High Expectations | Rating: | Proficient |

Findings

School leaders consistently convey high expectations to staff through a staff handbook, weekly newsletters, and ongoing feedback aligned to the Danielson Framework for Teaching. The school provides ongoing information to families regarding student progress.

Impact

Ongoing communication and professional development provided by school leaders support teachers' understanding and awareness of expectations regarding teaching and learning. Communication from school leaders and teachers through an online grade book system and other strategies provide frequent opportunities for families to understand progress towards meeting standards.

Supporting Evidence

- A review of the faculty handbook and staff newsletters revealed that school leaders consistently share high expectations connected to instructional design and delivery, classroom management, and professional responsibilities. Examples of items covered include having a content and language objective for all lessons, using the workshop model to deliver instruction, and that lessons should include multiple entry points to ensure all students can complete the task. Additionally, the staff receives a weekly newsletter that includes important due states and reminders. Each newsletter also includes the instructional focus for the school year as a reminder to staff. For example, included in a newsletter from February is a reminder to plan lessons that keep students engaged from bell to bell and reminders about upcoming due dates such as benchmark assessments and report card distribution. The staff handbook and various newsletters, taken together, reveal that high expectations are consistently communicated to staff.

- School leaders have developed a system of accountability that holds all staff to high expectations. Weekly professional development supports teachers' meeting high expectations connected to the Danielson Framework for Teaching. As an example, school leaders provided professional development on developing content and language objectives to support teachers in this expectation. Additionally, school leaders conduct both evaluative and non-evaluative observations as one method of holding teachers accountable. Teachers shared that school leaders frequently conduct walkthroughs after a PD session to provide feedback and next steps. Additionally, teachers all agreed that they were supported in meeting expectations. Thus, teachers are held accountable and supported in meeting schoolwide goals and high expectations.

- Expectations connected to next level readiness are shared with families through phone calls, an online platform, and in-person meetings. Parents spoke about the effectiveness of the online platform for staying informed. One parent shared that the online platform allows her to stay up to date about any work her child needs to complete. Families also attend various monthly workshops and events at the school on topics such as nutrition, cyberbullying, and preparing for state exams. Additionally, parents attend a monthly “breakfast with the principal” in which they have the opportunity to visit classrooms and discuss concerns with the principal. One parent shared that she had not missed a “breakfast with the principal” all year. She added that it was very helpful to visit classrooms to learn more about what students are expected to complete. Parents also receive information about student progress through parent-teacher conferences and parent engagement time on Tuesdays. Thus, families understand the high expectations for their children and the progress the children are making to meet these expectations.
Additional Finding

| Quality Indicator: | 4.1 Teacher Support and Supervision | Rating: Proficient |

Findings

School leaders support teacher development with frequent evaluative and nonevaluative classroom observations. Prompt written feedback captures teachers’ strengths, challenges, and next steps using the Danielson Framework for Teaching.

Impact

Evaluative and nonevaluative observations result in feedback that promotes professional growth and makes clear the expectations for teacher practice as well as the supports available to them.

Supporting Evidence

- School leaders conduct frequent classroom observations and provide feedback utilizing the Danielson Framework for Teaching. Each rated item includes specific, detailed evidence from the observed class to support the rating. Next steps for teaching improvements are included at the close of each observation report. Teachers also receive verbal feedback after nonevaluative observations. For example, one teacher shared that he received feedback on using math tools that directly improved his practice. School leaders norm observations a few times a year to ensure all teachers receive accurate and high-quality feedback. The principal also shared that he observes highly-effective teachers earlier in the cycle to identify best practice and provide newer or struggling teachers additional time before their first evaluative observation. Additionally, school leaders review data from previous observations to determine teacher growth and inform schoolwide professional development. As an example, after a cycle of observations student engagement was identified as an area that needed more support. In response, teachers received professional development on fostering student engagement.

- Observation reports contain feedback that captures teachers’ strengths and weaknesses and is accompanied by next steps teachers should take to improve their practice and impact student success. For example, one observation report commends the teacher for using the workshop model and explicitly modeling the skill students were learning. The school leader went on to recommend the teacher provide more time for student-student discussion of questions posed during the opening and closing of the lesson. Included in the lesson was a suggestion to have students pose driving questions as a springboard to deepen thinking and analysis of information. In another observation report, the teacher is commended for strong routines that maximized instructional time. Next steps for this teacher included conducting a close read of the mentor poem. Included in the report are specific strategies the teacher could use while conducting the close read. The observation also includes suggestions for follow-up lessons. During the teacher meeting, teachers came to a quick consensus that school leaders provide feedback and follow-up to ensure feedback is implemented or offer additional support.

- A review of observation reports reveals that teachers successfully implement recommended strategies and demonstrate growth. For example, one observation report recommends the teacher plan her lesson to include a mini-lesson on the skills or strategies being taught. In the next observation report, the teacher is commended for her mini-lesson and successfully implementing prior feedback. Teachers are also encouraged to conduct intervisitations as another strategy to support teacher growth and highlight best practices across the school. Therefore, school leaders consistently provide feedback and support that promotes teacher growth.