Quality Review Report

2018-2019

J.H.S. 185 Edward Bleeker
Junior High-Intermediate-Middle 25Q185
147-26 25 Drive
Queens
NY 11354

Principal: Theresa Mshar

Dates of Review:
December 12, 2018 - December 13, 2018

Lead Reviewer: Daniel Kim
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

J.H.S. 185 Edward Bleeker 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>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>To what extent does the school...</strong></td>
<td><strong>Area</strong></td>
<td><strong>Rating</strong></td>
</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>Area of Focus</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>Additional Finding</td>
<td>Proficient</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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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1.3 Make strategic organizational decisions to support the school’s instructional goals and meet student learning needs, as evidenced by meaningful student work products</td>
<td>Additional Finding</td>
<td>Well Developed</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3.1 Establish a coherent vision of school improvement that is reflected in a short list of focused, data-based goals that are tracked for progress and are understood and supported by the entire school community</td>
<td>Additional Finding</td>
<td>Proficient</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4.1 Observe teachers using the Danielson Framework for Teaching along with the analysis of learning outcomes to elevate school-wide instructional practices and implement strategies that promote professional growth and reflection</td>
<td>Additional Finding</td>
<td>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>Area of Celebration</td>
<td>Well Developed</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5.1 Evaluate the quality of school-level decisions, making adjustments as needed to increase the coherence of policies and practices across the school, with particular attention to the CCLS</td>
<td>Additional Finding</td>
<td>Proficient</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Findings

All teachers are engaged in structured inquiry-based professional collaborations through teacher teams, departmental teams and the inter-grade departmental professional development (PD) team. Embedded distributed leadership structures, such as model teachers, influence key school decisions.

Impact

Teachers, through professional collaborations and shared leadership opportunities, play an integral role in key decisions that affect student learning across the school, strengthen their instructional capacity and effects instructional coherence that increases student achievement for all learners.

Supporting Evidence

- Teacher inquiry supports the school’s instructional focus to foster strong student discussions that are rooted in deep questions. The professional development team, composed of ten model teachers from across grades and content areas, focus on increasing the rigor of student work products as evidenced in student discussions. As a result, teachers embrace a schoolwide understanding of instructional expectations, constructing a common student collaboration evaluation and student peer assessment of collaboration practices. In the vast majority of classes visited, students were engaged in peer-to-peer discussions in pairs, groups or whole class, questioning and clarifying, agreeing and disagreeing and making claims and counterclaims thus, pushing the thinking of their peers. Increased expectations for student discussions has resulted in a positive student performance trend in the school’s internal growth reports and in the 2018 State English Language Arts (ELA) exam for all students, including a 4 percent increase of students scoring level 3 and 4, and the schoolwide average proficiency from increasing from 3.18 to 3.27.

- Teachers shared that through collaborations and data analysis within teams, their instructional practices have strengthened. For example, through the data analysis work of the content team, a teacher noted that her students were struggling with reverse questions – such as the “not the main idea” – which she built into her pre-assessments and do now assignments. A science teacher shared that her students were not performing as well as anticipated on comprehending visual information and data presented, so she collaborated with her colleagues to incorporate more exposure to graphs starting from grade six so that they are graphing and analyzing data tables earlier. An ELA teacher shared that her teacher team noted a pattern across the grade analyzing by the mid-unit assessments. Students were struggling with symbolism and themes in *To Kill a Mockingbird*. To address this concern, they focused more on student discussions with noticeable improvements to student understandings in the end-of-unit assessments.

- Distributive leadership practices support teachers’ work to ensure curricular alignment and make key decisions about teaching practices. Model teachers facilitate the PD for the entire school faculty; organize colleague intervisitations to observe best practices and use their classrooms to serve as labsites; lead all teacher-inquiry groups and identify trends and patterns for student performance across the school. In terms of curriculum, teacher teams are spearheading efforts to implement the Educating Powerful Writers curriculum not only in ELA, but also across the content areas by incorporating texts aligned with social studies and science. Due to such embedded leadership practices, teachers make key instructional decisions across grade and content teams that have a positive impact on student learning across the school.
## Area of Focus

### Quality Indicator: 1.1 Curriculum

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<th>Rating:</th>
<th>Proficient</th>
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### Findings

School leaders and faculty align curricula to the Common Core Learning Standards, integrate the instructional shifts into curricula and tasks, and refine curricula and academic tasks using student work such as exit tickets.

### Impact

Educators are making purposeful decisions to build curricular coherence and promote college and career readiness, but this has not yet fully materialized across grades and content areas. While planned academic tasks emphasize rigorous habits, there are missed opportunities to plan for groups of students who are high achieving to elevate their cognitive engagement.

### Supporting Evidence

- Purposeful planning that incorporates the Common Core and instructional shifts build coherence across subject areas. Unit and lesson plans include focus questions, objectives, standards for math practice, content skills, academic vocabulary, differentiated tasks, and a variety of assessment methods. Planned strategies across lesson plans include tiered-academic vocabulary, use of sources, argumentative writing, text-based student discussions, fluency and multi-step problem solving. School leaders are working to strategically integrate deeper student-led discussions through deeper questioning or discussion techniques. For example, lesson plans for grade-eight students in social studies lead students to debate the validity of various viewpoints of imperialists and anti-imperialists based on primary documents such as the “Platform of the Anti-Imperialist League.” Plans for deep student discussions are evident in planning documents for ELA and social studies, but not as articulated in math or science, which has hampered full curricular coherence across grades and subject areas.

- Using student work and data, curricula are designed in a way that allows access for students including English Language Learners (ELLs) and students with disabilities. In a grade-seven math lesson plan, students are to work in groups to explore proportional relationships in multi-step ratio and percent problems in real-life situations such as leaving tips and gratuities. Plans for homogenous student groups, based on performance on previous day exit tickets, included discussing their math problem solving using two different methods to calculate tips, supported by multi-lingual “Let’s Talk Math” cards towards academic math conversations.

- Some plans include curricular extensions for students who were already performing at a high level. In a grade-eight ELA class, plans for a Convince Us activity include that students construct persuasive arguments about real-student life scenarios such as: developing a no-homework policy; creating an option to eliminate gym from the schedule to be able to take another elective class; maintaining status on the school’s athletics team by achieving a 65 percent or 80 percent passing grade in each subject; debating whether the school calendar should be 12 months long, rather than include a summer vacation. Planned extensions for students who had completed their arguments were to brainstorm expected counter-arguments and best responses to them. Purposeful planning for meaningful extensions of learning tasks was evident in some, but not in the vast majority of plans thus, potentially hampering some students from being fully engaged.
### Additional Finding

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

Teaching strategies such as student groupings, discussion protocols, scaffolds and differentiated tasks offer multiple entry points for students with opportunities to be engaged in genuine and rigorous discussions.

#### Impact

The consistent use of scaffolds in classrooms results in students demonstrating higher-order thinking in work products and discussions reflecting high levels of thinking and participation.

#### Supporting Evidence

- Teacher use student partnerships and groupings to support groups of students to gain more access to rigorous work. Students worked in homogeneous partnerships in a grade-seven science class to investigate the concept of homeostasis and how organisms maintain equilibrium. Students used differentiated scaffolds for calculations and activities, measured their baseline pulse, re-measured after various physical activities, and recorded qualitative self-reports of their breathing and body heat. Heterogeneous groups of grade-eight students, formed based on assessment data, debated in a science class the difference between expected and expressed phenotypes and potential reasons for the difference among various organisms, using their work on Punnett squares for their predictions and given environmental factors.

- Classroom scaffolds include discussion protocols, graphic organizers, differentiated problems and tasks. During a grade-eight ELA lesson, students worked in stations with different mediums such as poems, images, quotations, and excerpts from *To Kill a Mockingbird*. Using a snowball seminar discussion protocol, groups of students shared identified themes such as integrity across various mediums. Following a video montage of various scenarios, grade-seven students followed the Questions Formulating Technique (QFT) to construct open- and closed-ended questions around the role of cell phone use in daily life, supported by differentiated scaffolds on three different levels with either sentence frames or key words to develop their own questions and wonderings before a gallery walk of peer assessment. The use of scaffolds across classrooms supported multiple entry points into challenging tasks that enable students to demonstrate higher-order thinking skills.

- Across classrooms, student work and discussions reflected high levels of participation and student thinking thus producing meaningful work products. For example, students in a grade-eight ELA class justified and argued against Atticus's decision to defend Tom Robinson in *To Kill a Mockingbird*. Following the debate, students input their arguments and supporting details on a Taking a Stand online platform which was viewed in real-time by classmates for response. Students in a grade-seven social studies class, following quote analysis work on four differentiated primary documents, conducted a “spontaneous argumentation” session on whether or not the United States should declare war on Spain following the sinking of the USS Maine.
**Findings**

Across classrooms, teachers use common assessments such as the New York City periodic assessments, curricular-aligned rubrics such as science lab and project rubrics, and schoolwide grading policies that are aligned to the school’s curricula. Teachers use these assessments to determine student progress towards goals across grades and content areas.

**Impact**

Through these assessments, students receive actionable teacher and peer feedback about their progress, and teachers adjust curricula and instruction to support student learning.

**Supporting Evidence**

- Curricular-aligned assessment practices and grading policies provide actionable feedback across content areas. Students are given teacher and peer feedback through teacher-created assessments and rubrics by grades and across subject areas that align with specific units of study. On a grade-six physical & chemical change lab, feedback consisted of four portions: scores given from peer review; scores given from teacher assessment; written feedback with positives, negatives and next steps; and a space for student self-reflection on the feedback for application, next steps and improvement. On a grade-eight social studies Reconstruction unit task, feedback consisted of three parts: a score on the rubric; strengths and next steps; and student reflection. The essay rubric outlined expectations on the thesis and argument, and organization. One student reflection articulates his own strengths: “My introduction clearly answers the task questions” and his next steps include “using the graphic organizer and sentence starters to help organize my essay better.”

- Across classrooms, teachers use conferences and self- and peer-assessments as part of school assessment practices to provide actionable feedback for students. For example, a teacher in grade-eight ELA conferenced with groups of students working on building supports for their arguments, and offered that the students consider who their audience is such as the school principal so that they can self-evaluate whether or not a supporting point will be powerful. All students interviewed stated that they use rubrics across content areas not only to receive a grade and actionable next steps, but also to self- and peer-assess as part of their work. Grade-six students in ELA peer edited their partner’s argumentative writing piece, articulating specific areas that they wanted to get their peer’s feedback on as a focus area: introduction/claim, reason/evidence, counterclaim/refutation, conclusion, or clarity/logical organization. In the classroom, a student shared with his peer: “I want feedback on my rebuttal to see if my evidence is strong enough; I struggled with this in fifth grade and want to get better.”

- Teachers administer common assessments to determine student progress towards student goals in content standards. For example, the New York City periodic assessments in math are administered to all students multiple times per year, and error analysis data on specific standards is used to adjust grade curriculum to address performance shortfalls. Patterns and trends that the math content team identified included students struggling with real-world math problems expressed either in variable form, in inequalities or in linear equations. Action steps included modifying their questioning and their unit assessments such as the Share my Candy task to use real-world word problems to be able to clearly assess student math thinking.
Findings
School leaders consistently communicate high expectations for teaching and learning to the entire staff through schoolwide meetings, individually with teachers and through online platforms. All staff members communicate expectations connected to a path to college and career and partner with families.

Impact
A culture of high expectations promotes shared accountability among school leaders and faculty for improving teaching and learning and contributes to strong partnerships among staff and families which result in student progress towards meeting all expectations.

Supporting Evidence

- School leaders articulate high expectations for all staff through discussions at faculty conferences, memos, individual and team conversations, and a staff handbook that details expectations related to instruction, PD, and other areas of school operations. Teachers collaborate with each other to develop and share curriculum maps, units of study, lesson plan templates, data collection sheets, templates for analyzing student work, and other documents through the Google Classroom platform which helps build their capacity to meet high expectations for instruction, communication, and professionalism by all. Using the Danielson Framework for Teaching, school leaders meet regularly with all teachers to engage in reviews of professional growth, expectations for high quality teaching and learning and follow up based on attended PD.

- To expand teacher capacity in delivering effective instruction, all teachers receive feedback on their performance in relation to best practices highlighted by the Danielson Framework for Teaching. Additionally, through individual and team discussions at grade, department, and common-planning meetings, staff members receive comprehensive PD support linked to their needs and interests, including strategic linking of teachers for intervisitations. School leaders further reinforce high expectations by providing all teachers with PD support in skill building to improve their proficiency in areas such as questioning and discussion and in-class assessment practices. Ten mentor teachers, from across grades and content areas, collaborate with school leaders to analyze student work, notice patterns and trends across grades and content in student performance and facilitate corresponding learning activities for all staff.

- Staff members communicate expectations to families through the JHS 185 Parent Handbook, bilingual text messages, telephone calls, emails, curriculum nights, monthly student-of-the-month celebrations, open-house events, and the interactive school website on Google Classrooms. During the meeting with families, they all stated that they are regularly invited to workshops and conferences in which they learn about expectations for their children. Some reported that they attended an orientation event that informed families about college trips and requirements for high school. Parents also reported that staff members partner with families in accelerating student progress towards high school and college readiness goals not only through progress monitoring online, but on an individualized, personal level. For example, parents shared examples of teachers’ multi-year focus on developing study habits in school and at home, from notetaking skills in grade-six to paraphrasing in grade-seven, and how their children are becoming more independent as a result.
Additional Finding

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Quality Indicator:</th>
<th>4.1 Teacher Support and Supervision</th>
<th>Rating:</th>
<th>Well Developed</th>
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</table>

Findings

School leaders and model teachers support teacher development for all teachers, including those new to the profession and new to the school through strategic cycles of observation. Teachers receive feedback that accurately captures their strengths, challenges and outlines their next steps using the Danielson Framework for Teaching.

Impact

Teachers receive feedback from school leaders and model teachers that articulate clear expectations for their practice, support professional growth and reflection and align with teacher professional goals thus, elevating schoolwide instructional practice.

Supporting Evidence

- School leaders strategically conduct frequent cycles of support and observations. All new teachers are supported by an F-status former principal, who had served as the current principal’s mentor, by walkthroughs and first observations with the Danielson Framework for Teaching. School leaders align observations in the first cycle for all teachers around content areas with follow-up observations based on the need of particular teachers, and the expertise of the school leaders. Evidence included teacher observations conducted by an assistant principal who serves as an expert on assessment practices, giving specific and time-bound feedback reports for implementing student and peer feedback. Teachers stated that it was clear that the intent of this first cycle of observations was linked to ensuring consistency of school practice across classrooms and grades, particularly regarding student questioning and discussion.

- Model teachers from across grades and content areas, as part of the PD committee, analyze student work products, notice patterns and trends across settings for students, share curricular adjustments identified by their teacher teams and then identify the instructional practices that need support and adjustments. In addition, this team identifies the PD needed, including colleague-led intervisitations, serving as lab-sites for sharing best practices, as well as utilizing off-side PD opportunities to support those practices. Following PD, school leaders and model teachers, who also serve as mentors to new teachers, visit classrooms to observe implementation of the practices shared, and follow up within their grade and content teacher teams.

- Feedback, which aligns with professional goals, supports teacher growth as evident in a review of teacher observations. Teachers and school leaders meet one-to-one to focus on student performance to gauge the impact of practice on student achievement and support professional goal setting. An observation report for one teacher focuses on assessment practices which was the domain area in which she scored the lowest in the previous year. The report stated that students be given frequent opportunities for self- and peer-assessment, attached resources, and gave a specific date for a follow-up lesson that incorporates suggested strategies. Subsequent observations showed the teacher honing peer-assessment practices, suggesting “for peer feedback to be more meaningful, provide specific ‘look-fors’ while evaluating each other’s work.” This pattern of alignment across feedback from observations reports and professional goals was consistent throughout the review of observations.