Quality Review Report

2018-2019

I.S. 230
Junior High-Intermediate-Middle 30Q230

73-10 34 Avenue
Jackson Heights
NY 11372

Principal: Ronald Zirin

Dates of Review:
May 14, 2019 - May 15, 2019

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

I.S. 230 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></td>
<td></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>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>Additional Finding</td>
<td>Well Developed</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
### School Culture

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

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Area of Focus</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>Proficient</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>Well Developed</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

### Systems for Improvement

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

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Area of Finding</th>
<th>Rating</th>
</tr>
</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>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>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>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>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>Proficient</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Findings

Grade and department teacher teams systematically analyze student work to make improvements to their instructional craft with a focus on assessment practices. Distributive leadership structures are embedded through the use of model teachers.

Impact

Teacher team work results in shared improvements in instructional practice and mastery of goals for groups of students, captured in student Smart Goal forms. Teachers’ integral role in key decisions, such as determining the schoolwide focus on assessment practices, affects student learning across the school.

Supporting Evidence

- Notes and minutes from the grade eight teacher team focused on examining student work products from the geometry transformations unit. Artifacts include unit pre-test item error analyses, identifying trends and patterns of student strengths and challenges that are organized by Common Core standards, creating a targeted action plan and focus on students in need of additional support. Further artifacts include identification of strategies for targeted students, online resources for teaching, individualized student questions, scaffolds, as well as proposed changes to the post-assessment to show evidence of student mastery and growth relative to identified standards. Evidence of improvements to teacher practice include adjustments to the Smart Goal form so that students create their unit goals, record pre-test scores broken down by standards, select strategies that they can use to support their growth in a standard, action steps, and calculations of their own percent growth on that standard as measured by their post-unit assessment.

- During the teacher team observation, teachers in the grade seven math department utilized the Looking at Task protocol to analyze student end-of-unit benchmark assessment on determining the area and perimeter of a real-life situation. Teachers collected their noticings, identifying successes such as the correct use of formulas and decomposing shapes to break down the problem, but also challenges such as misconceptions around when to use circumference and radii. Teachers then discussed applying the constructed response scoring guide from New York State math test so that scoring is normed across the grade. The meeting concluded with instructional changes based on the patterns and trends identified, including reteaching for decomposing shapes as part of the problem solving strategy and changes to the assessment such as having the picture from the problem placed on the second page as a visual reminder of the task. Such teacher team inquiry results in increased mastery for groups of students. According to the pre- and post-unit assessments for the statistics and probability unit, the number of students at or above grade level standards progressed from 10 percent to more than 67 percent.

- Distributive leadership structures are evidenced via the use of model teachers who conduct peer-to-peer intervisitations, serve as mentors to grade and department colleagues and facilitate teacher team meetings. Teachers make key decisions that affect student learning. For example, teachers determined the yearlong instructional focus to hone assessment practices as a means to adjust instruction, to track student growth and to provide meaningful feedback. Interviewed teachers stated that the decision on the instructional focus stemmed from department team meetings where colleagues discussed patterns and trends on practices observed through instructional rounds. Consequently, they collectively determined their problem of practice for focus this school year.
### Findings

The school community’s approach to creating a culture for student and adult learning includes purposeful use of resources, outreach to families and professional learning as well as staff and student learning experiences related to a civics-oriented philosophy.

### Impact

Student voice is welcomed and valued, but there are missed opportunities for students across grades to meaningfully guide school improvement efforts. While there are learning opportunities that promote positive behaviors, there is not yet evidence that there is full adoption by students.

### Supporting Evidence

- To build school culture that is conducive to student and adult learning, school leaders strategically utilize the annex building to house the grade six students, assigning guidance counselors and the Substance Abuse and Prevention Intervention Services worker to provide at-risk counseling, adjusting after-school programs, and forming smaller classes to ease student transitions from elementary to middle school while supporting their social-emotional learning. In addition, the dean, guidance counselor and assistant principal loop with each grade of students so that they are able to build multi-year relationships with them and their families. Teachers discussed the importance that students see a reflection of themselves in the text selections in academic tasks as well as in the classroom libraries. Students shared that they are treated with respect by teachers in a safe environment, which was echoed by interviewed parents who unanimously stated that they felt that their children are safe and treated with respect in school. However, there is a missed opportunity for a unified theory of action that coalesces the various efforts to build the school culture.

- School leaders and faculty welcome student voice towards school improvement efforts. Middle school students, through the student government, organize the school festival for grade six and seven students, including programming, games and prizes. Students also participated in the selection of the colors of the school uniform and parameters of what is deemed acceptable as part of the school uniform, such as sweatshirts. However, there is not yet evidence of students taking ownership in order to drive and manage schoolwide improvement efforts. For example, while there was evidence that select students were collecting signatures and advocating for healthier eating choices and better food options for the school, interviewed students were unable to describe examples where students were leading and guiding schoolwide improvement efforts toward a successful conclusion.

- The school community aligns its social-emotional learning professional development, (PD), family outreach and student learning experiences with a grade wide civics course that focuses on civic engagement. Curricula for grade six students focus on local, national and global community challenges, while students in grades seven continue that work with more in-depth research and create community projects. Grade eight students engage in creating a mock curricula that teaches peers about current issues and ways to address the social challenges. All students participate in community service with local community-based organizations, such as a soup kitchen or a senior center. The civics course is supplemented with a curriculum that emphasizes habits that reinforce personal and academic behaviors. These efforts are discussed with parents during monthly Coffee with the Principal gatherings, so that they support these efforts at home. Select interviewed students related positive impact of their community service in their own lives or applying any of the habits learned. However, promotion of personal and academic behaviors has resulted in adaptation by some but not all of the students.
Additional Finding

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

Findings

Across grades and subject areas, curricula consistently emphasize rigorous habits and higher-order skills such as the evaluation of different perspectives and synthesis of research for student presentations. Curricula and academic tasks are planned and refined using student work, pre-and post-unit assessments and student goals.

Impact

A diversity of learners, including English Language Learners (ELLs) and students with disabilities, have access to and are cognitively engaged in challenging tasks.

Supporting Evidence

- Tasks within lesson plans and unit plans consistently emphasize rigorous habits and higher order thinking across grades and subjects. For example, plans for a grade seven social studies class tasked students to create a pitch for a new memorial for whom they deem most responsible for ending slavery in America. The task required students to consider and critically examine multiple perspectives on slavery, including those from Black Civil War soldiers to abolitionists, from those who engaged in the Underground Railroad to Abraham Lincoln in order to provide arguments and supporting evidence. Supports for students included sentence stems and starters, graphic organizers and content prompts. The planned culminating task included students creating a planning document that outlined the memorial description, overall message and the claim of the memorial, the emotion to be evoked and materials to be used.

- Plans for a grade six English Language Arts, (ELA), class included students presenting in front of peers their social issues research, as a culminating project for their unit. Peers were to evaluate and give feedback on delivery, content and awareness of audience, as well as a glow and grow that student presenters could use to improve their work. The plans included setting project expectations, such as background story, causes and effects of the social issue, real-life examples, as well as a call to action on how to cause positive change on the issue. In addition, plans focus on how to give helpful and actionable feedback within peer glows and grows. Supports for English Language Learners included not only scaffolds for students to create the presentation through online translation resources, but also sentence stems and starters to support student work in giving actionable peer feedback.

- Curricula are designed in a way that allows access for diverse learners by using student work, assessment data and student goals. For example, plans for a grade eight science lesson on preparing students for the New York State Science exam include pairs of students rotating in three different stations with tasks for force and motion, and measurement. Plans utilize student work products and benchmark assessments for purposeful partnerships, as well as differentiated levels of questions within the stations, and focused scaffolds and checklists for specific groups of students who had previously struggled with specific areas. Plans for a grade seven math lesson utilized entrance and exit slips and student goals, created based on the pre-unit assessment, to form purposeful groups of students to support their work on finding the perimeter and surface area of two- and three-dimensional geometric shapes. Plans included utilizing graphic organizers, physical models and manipulatives for small group strategy instruction for those who had not yet mastered the concept.
Additional Finding

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

Findings

Across classrooms, teaching strategies such as the use of small group strategy instruction, tiered texts, varied content, and visual and language scaffolds consistently provide multiple entry points into the curricula.

Impact

A variety of learners, including ELLs and students with disabilities, are engaged in appropriately challenging tasks and demonstrate higher-order thinking skills such as analyzing and synthesizing research on social issues to present at the schoolwide civics fair.

Supporting Evidence

- In a grade eight ELA class, students conducted a peer review of their social-issues poetry anthology. While homogeneous student partnerships were evaluating each other’s work and providing feedback according to the project benchmarks and rubrics, the teacher worked with a group of four targeted students based on evaluation of their work products. The purpose of the group was to teach the students how a poet uses line breaks and punctuation as part of a writing craft to emphasize certain elements and messages within a poem. Following the small group instruction, the students independently reexamined their own anthology of poetry to note what message they wanted to emphasize and how punctuation and line breaks could support that work. Thus, students are provided with differentiated and multiple entry points into the work.

- Grade six students, participating in an ELA lesson, worked in topic-specific groups, such as the refugee crisis, gender education inequality, or water shortages. They were tasked with, synthesizing research articles on six different Lexile levels around analyzing whether or not specific text passages provided background information, reasons why readers should care, or how to support change on the topic. In a grade eight ELA class, students with disabilities were supported by choosing texts across five levels focused on the issue of police body cameras. They were required to develop comprehension strategies for unfamiliar words and annotate the texts to determine the author’s point of view. English Language Learners were supported in a grade six math lesson on histograms with visual and content scaffolds within the lesson and as a reference throughout the whole class lesson and during working on tasks in the math center. During a grade eight science lesson, students utilized vocabulary glossaries, definitions and content previews in Hindi, Bengali and Spanish, reflective of their need, to access the task.

- Student work products across grades and subject areas reflect high levels of thinking and participation. For example, grade eight students worked in six different table groups, formed based on Regents level pre-assessments identifying challenges in student mastery of math content in either quadratic equations, functions, or graph interpretations of equations or functions. As part of their own practice on the specific identified need, students independently accessed previous Regents questions on those topics from a class resource, sharing with their peers not only their own computational work but also strategies to solve the problem. Students were heard giving each other strategies for breaking down the problem, ways that test makers are creating “trappings” to mislead the reader, as well as identifying and addressing each other’s misconceptions. Student ownership within discussions and work products is a building practice across classrooms visited during this review.
Findings

Across the vast majority of classrooms, teachers use assessments such as unit pre- and post-tests and rubrics, such as the schoolwide argumentative writing rubric, that are aligned to the school’s curricula. These assessments and corresponding item analysis trackers are explicitly aligned to the New York State Learning Standards to create a clear portrait of student mastery and to adjust instruction for student needs.

Impact

Students receive actionable and meaningful feedback that is aligned to their unit-based goals, and all students demonstrate increased mastery according to results from student reading level assessments.

Supporting Evidence

- Across content areas, unit pre- and post-assessment questions, and performance-task rubrics are aligned to the New York State Common Core Learning Standards. Teachers break down student performance on these unit assessments through item analyses and identify areas of student challenge, which serve to identify student goals for improvement for the unit. For example, in an argumentative essay writing task, feedback included: scores on the schoolwide argumentative writing rubric that articulated expectations for structure, evidence and elaboration, craft and mechanics, with sub-indicators aligned to specific New York State writing standards. Teacher feedback within the essay, included compliments for introduction/hook and probing questions, such as, “Why else should we care about this [besides the cost of this social issue]?” What else could we spend this money for?” The feedback process is supported by a self-evaluation and goal-setting form, which breaks down components into concrete next steps, highlighting what should be student goals for improvement within the unit. Teacher assessment practices thus create a clear portrait of student mastery.

- Interviewed students across grades unanimously stated receiving actionable and meaningful feedback to improve their work, and that it is applicable across content areas. For example, one student described receiving peer feedback that she was repetitive with her elaboration across her writing. She stated that she in turn used that to focus her elaboration within her social studies social-issues project. Another student described how feedback received in math on surface area helped her better understand her work on the digestive system in science, where chewing food increases surface area and aids in digestion. Students described consistent practices with pre- and post-unit assessments as well as mid-unit benchmarks, which helps them create and measure their progress towards achieving their goals. Furthermore, students articulated concrete ways that teachers help them achieve those goals, including teacher-created scaffolds and small group strategy lessons.

- Teachers utilize student performance, progress in work products and assessments, such as running records, to make adjustments to instruction. For example, ELA lesson plans for a grade six social-issues unit assigned different groups of students to work on Lexile-leveled texts that reflected student reading levels and performance on unit pre-assessments. Similarly, grade eight students were observed during an ELA class visit annotating and using comprehension strategies to infer authors’ points of view, applying those strategies at four stations, each with a different set of leveled texts. Plans and observed practices that use student data to formulate differentiated tasks and supports was consistent in reviewed instructional planning documents, across grades and content areas. This work has resulted in all students, including students with disabilities and ELLs, making progress from the start of the year to the date of review towards and beyond attaining grade-level standards as measured by student reading levels.
Additional Finding

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<tr>
<th>Quality Indicator:</th>
<th>3.4 High Expectations</th>
<th>Rating:</th>
<th>Well Developed</th>
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</table>

Findings

School leaders consistently communicate instructional high expectations to the entire staff through individual, grade and faculty meetings. Teacher teams and staff establish a culture for learning that systematically communicates a unified set of high expectations for all students through Smart Goal processes.

Impact

The culture of mutual accountability to meet staff expectations includes ensuring that students receive individualized and focused feedback and support so that they own their educational experience and are prepared for the next level.

Supporting Evidence

- School leaders articulate high expectations for all staff through discussions at schoolwide professional development (PD), days, faculty conferences, as well as individual and grade/department conferences. Through these individual and group meetings, school leaders detail expectations related to academic instruction, social-emotional learning and school operations. In addition, school leaders meet regularly with teachers individually to engage in reviews of professional growth, expectations for high quality teaching and learning and follow-up based on attended PD. To expand capacity in delivering effective instruction, all teachers receive feedback on their performance aligned to best practices highlighted by the Danielson Framework for Teaching.

- School leaders further reinforce high expectations for instruction by providing all teachers with PD support to improve their proficiency in areas such as using assessment data to hone instruction, how to track student progress and provide meaningful feedback. This was an area of particular concern highlighted by the previous year’s Advance ratings. Interviewed teachers articulated a sense of mutual accountability through their work of department and grade teacher teams, where they collaborate to develop and share curriculum maps and units of study, create differentiated benchmark assessments, articulate action plans for targeted focus students, and share instructional resources and scaffolds to support student access to content material.

- Students receive ongoing and detailed feedback from teachers and peers which is recorded within their Smart Goals form for each unit of study across content areas. Students analyze their performance in pre- and post-assessments, create their own goals to use specific strategies and action steps to make progress, and calculate their own percent growth in the Common Core content standard of that unit. Students are supported towards their next steps for high school and beyond through meetings with the guidance counselor and dean that follow them through their entire middle school years. Interviewed students described how they receive feedback from peers and teachers such as becoming less repetitive with arguments, utilizing different strategies to show their thinking, elaborating and providing more evidence for their arguments. Students shared how such feedback supports improving their work by articulating specific rates of growth, getting a better grade, and reaching their academic goals. Students across all grades unanimously identified target high schools that they were aiming for, specific requirements for those schools, as well as what they have to do now to be ready.