New York City Academy for Discovery
Elementary 27Q306
95-16 89Th Avenue
Queens
NY 11421
Principal: Cheryl Ann Leone

Dates of Review:
November 8, 2018 - November 9, 2018
Lead Reviewer: Luz Cortazzo
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

New York City Academy for Discovery serves students in grade PK through grade 5. 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 Danielson Framework for Teaching, aligned to the curricula, engaging, and meets the needs of all learners so that all students produce meaningful work products</td>
<td>Additional Finding</td>
<td>Proficient</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2.2 Align assessments to curricula, use on-going assessment and grading practices, and analyze information on student learning outcomes to adjust instructional decisions at the team and classroom levels</td>
<td>Area of Focus</td>
<td>Proficient</td>
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### School Culture

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

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Area</th>
<th>Rating</th>
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<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>
</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>
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### Systems for Improvement

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

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<tr>
<th>Area</th>
<th>Rating</th>
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<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>
</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>
</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>
</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>
</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>
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</tbody>
</table>
Findings

The vast majority of teachers are engaged in structured professional collaborations during which they use specific protocols such as, the Inquiry Data Collection Tool to analyze student work products. Structures are present in the school community that support teacher leaders who collaborate with the administration.

Impact

The work of teacher teams has led to increased teacher collaboration and instructional coherence across grades. Teachers are actively engaged in making key decisions regarding student learning across the school.

Supporting Evidence

- During a grade three inquiry meeting, teachers analyzed the results of iReady math data for the grade. Teachers on the grade, including the English as a New Language Teacher (ENL) and Individual Education Plan (IEP) teacher, utilized the Inquiry Data Collection Tool to discuss students’ work and determine next steps for teaching. Teachers shared that across all subgroups, students with disabilities, English Language Learners (ELLs), and general education students struggle with algebra and algebraic thinking and discussed several resources and strategies they would employ to support this area of learning. As a result of their discussions they decided to use strategic scaffolds to support the students’ diverse needs and improve their understanding of the content and concepts.

- Distributive leadership structures allow teachers to have a key role in decision making that effects student learning across the school. Leadership roles within teams help ensure instructional coherence and provide ongoing communication regarding what is happening within the school community. Grade leaders represent their respective grades on the school’s vertical team who collaborate with administrators regarding curricula and instructional decisions. These collaborations resulted in the decision to make the instructional focus address connecting learning to experience. Additionally, the creation of strategies, and professional learning opportunities where students are exposed to the relevance of what they are learning and how it correlates to their everyday lives was an outcome of input by teacher leaders.

- Distributive leadership has contributed to school improvement. It has led to each staff member becoming a stakeholder in the school. Additionally, it has contributed to their own unique skill sets, which help improve practices within the whole school community. Leadership exists within vertical and horizontal teacher teams as well as teams made up of two or three facilitators including the school’s counselor, social worker, school psychologist, teachers, and paraprofessionals. Teachers’ voice is welcome and result in decisions that impact student achievement. For example, in order to leverage the expertise of teacher teams and build teacher capacity, the fourth-grade teachers decided to departmentalize in order to teach the subject area where they had the greatest expertise. This decision led to the work with Algebra 4 All, the Learning Partners Program (LPP) and use of the “upside down model” for the school’s math block where students engage in productive struggle instead of waiting for the answer.
Area of Focus

<table>
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<tr>
<th>Quality Indicator:</th>
<th>2.2 Assessment</th>
<th>Rating:</th>
<th>Proficient</th>
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Findings

Across the school, teachers utilize a variety of assessments including running records, chapter and unit assessments and task specific rubrics, aligned to the school’s curricula. Assessment practices consistently reflect the use of ongoing checks for understanding and student self-assessment.

Impact

Teachers utilize assessments to glean evidence during instruction to monitor student understanding and provide feedback. However, checks for understanding and self-reflective practices do not always provide students with a clear portrait of where they are with missed opportunities for teachers to make effective instructional adjustments to meet all students’ learning needs.

Supporting Evidence

- Across grades, teachers utilize a plethora of assessments such as Fountas and Pinnell Benchmark System running records, New York City Measures of Student Learning (MOSL) for literacy and math, chapter, and unit assessments from GOMath!, EL Education Skills Block Assessments, and iReady Diagnostics for English Language Arts and math. Additionally, teachers use task-specific and standards-aligned rubrics to provide feedback to students explaining strengths and next steps. Students utilize self and peer assessment checklists to self-regulate their work prior to teacher input and feedback. However, teacher feedback and student reflections are not always meaningful and directly aligned to a task specific rubric. During the meeting with students, some were not clear on why they were working on differentiated tasks during lessons, while others were unable to articulate their next learning steps within a content area.

- Across classrooms, teachers utilize multiple methods to check for understanding. The methodology includes but is not limited to anecdotes, mid-workshop interruptions, exit slips, student self-assessment, hand signals, peer feedback checklists, think-pair-share, task specific rubrics and essential questions. Students complete self-assessment checklists on some written assignments. However, not all teachers use this information to provide tailored feedback to students. As a result, learners are sometimes unable to take responsibility for their next learning steps.

- Student work products displayed on hall and classroom bulletin boards, and in student work portfolios contained teacher feedback and opportunities for students to utilize checklists to reflect on their work. Feedback included a glow and a grow. However, the feedback was not always specific and did not always require students to think deeply about their work or to explain how they can improve their work on the next level, thus limiting their performance.
## Additional Finding

### Quality Indicator:

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<tr>
<th>1.1 Curriculum</th>
<th>Rating:</th>
<th>Well Developed</th>
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### Findings

All curricula are strategically aligned to the Common Core Learning Standards and purposefully illustrate integration of ELA and math instructional shifts. Grade and vertical teams collaborate to revise curricula and academic tasks.

### Impact

Collaborative curricular decisions have led to coherence and result in students having ready access to curricula designed to actively engage all students, including students with disabilities and ELLs, which promote college and career readiness.

### Supporting Evidence

- Teacher’s lessons and unit plans are aligned to Common Core Learning Standards, promote the instructional shifts and reflect the school’s instructional focus, which centers on connecting learning to experience. In order to support math instruction, teachers introduced a new method of facilitating the math block, moving away from “I do, we do, you do” to “we do, you do, I do,” also known as the “upside-down” teaching method in grades 2-5, encouraging students to grapple with math tasks on their own to discover new ways of solving problems. Lesson plans included planning differentiated tasks for ELLs and students with disabilities, with effective scaffolds such as, math manipulatives and visual explanations to support struggling learners. Noted in lesson plans students are taught the academic and personal behaviors necessary for college and career readiness. Opportunities are provided for students to work collaboratively, act as student facilitators, engage in peer conferencing, and self-assessment. Across the school, teachers use the ClassDojo, an online application, to reward students based on APB characteristics of collaboration, engagement, perseverance, self-regulation, and work habits.

- Across the school, teachers are using Expeditionary Learning in grades K-5, in addition to the EL Education foundational skills block portion of the curriculum in K-2. This resulted from analysis of data that indicated a weakness in phonics and phonemic awareness for their early readers. For the other core subjects GOMath!, Algebra for All in grades 4-5, Amplify Science and Passports to Social Studies is implemented. Within and across grades and content areas, teachers are incorporating the instructional shifts namely; citing and using text-based evidence to support a claim, writing from sources, close reading, and academic vocabulary. These shifts were specifically indicated in a teacher’s fourth grade reading unit on Building Background Knowledge: Launching Research of Animal Defense Mechanisms.

- The vast majority of lesson plans included modified tasks for individual and groups of students in each subject based on assessment data. In a Kindergarten math plan, the iReady math data was used to group students in centers to count, identify and draw pictures to show numbers 1-10. Each math center was provided a different count activity such as “I can compare numbers 1-5 when bowling”, “I can show numbers 1-10 in a ten frame”, “I can identify greater numbers,” and “I can use play dough to create and show numbers in a ten frame.” Although the task required students to work in centers, ELL students were assigned to work with the ENL teacher for individual language support and identified at risk students were provided modifications to provide a preview to the commencement of the lesson.
**Findings**

Teacher practices are aligned to the Danielson *Framework For Teaching* and the belief that students learn best by connecting learning to experience which is evident in student work products and discussions.

**Impact**

The result of a common understanding of student learning has led to all students demonstrating high levels of critical thinking and engagement.

**Supporting Evidence**

- Across the classrooms visited, teaching practices and student learning was aligned to the school’s core belief of “connecting learning to experience.” Most students were actively engaged with the content and tasks because of the appropriate supports they were provided. For example, in a third grade, self-contained classroom during math instruction, the teacher implemented a backward by design model. The lesson began with students working in math center stations tailored to meet their individual needs. Students had a choice between multiplication, addition, and subtraction stations. The next portion of the lesson included the “You do” to complete a problem of the day based on the skill multiplying by five and ten. Students were observed working independently to solve the problem and then they discussed their work with members of their table group. Groups then selected a strategy to model and present to the rest of the class. Students were encouraged to use the question matrix to ask about the strategies and the different ways the problem was solved. Latest data indicates that student engagement in discovery-based learning experiences is leading to increased individual student performance.

- Across classrooms, teacher questioning pushed students’ thinking and most often required them to explain “why.” For example, in a grade five class, students engaged in collaborative learning groups while participating at learning stations to solve the problem of the day. Students were observed using accountable talk stems, the Question Matrix, and listening discussion rubrics to facilitate math discourse and ensure equity in student voice. The student’s utilized discussions and information shared within the whole and small groups, to complete tasks that met their specific needs.

- Teachers help students make connections to prior knowledge, personal experiences, the real world, and other disciplines to maximize student engagement. For all subjects, students engage in small group learning where they grapple with a question, problem, or task. In a grade three, Integrated Co-Teaching class students were observed in skill-based, data driven math centers where they practiced fluency and were required to spiral their math skills and demonstrate their thinking.
Additional Finding

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

Structures and systems are in place for school leaders to consistently communicate high expectations to the entire staff. The school’s faculty communicates high expectations to all students through the use of the “College and Career Readiness Teacher Handbook.”

Impact

Structures that support the school’s high expectations build collaboration and accountability among staff and school leadership. The successful feedback and guidance from staff support all students, including ELLs and students with disabilities resulting in their college and career readiness.

Supporting Evidence

- School leaders consistently communicate high expectations for all staff, which are evidenced throughout the school community through verbal and written structures, such as new teacher orientation, teacher teamwork, instructional memos, weekly emails, observation feedback, post-observation conferences, teacher reflection sheets, and a staff handbook. Additionally, ongoing professional learning experiences aligned with the Danielson Framework for Teaching are provided through instructional coaches, off-site consultants, and expert teachers. In order to support teachers’ pedagogical growth, school administrators provide transparent feedback that clearly outlines expectations communicated through the weekly announcement email. Teachers then make the necessary adjustments in teaching practices to build their own capacity, which has led to many students meeting grade level expectations.

- Engaging students in higher-order learning is a goal the principal has set for all staff to push students’ higher order thinking and provide students with essential knowledge and skills to meet the real-world demands of college and career readiness. To activate learning, teachers help students make connections to prior knowledge, personal experiences, the real world, and other disciplines to maximize student engagement from the onset of a unit or lesson. Students are aware of the absolutes such as; unpacking the learning target, which includes embedded academic vocabulary helping to set a purpose for their learning and ensuring their meeting the learning target. Students stated that working with teachers to design the success criteria of a lesson helps them to learn the goal of the lesson and understand what is to be learned. This provides them with a learning tool to use to answer the question, “How will I know whether I’ve achieved the learning goal.”

Teachers are provided and consistently use a College and Career Readiness Standards Teacher Handbook. Across classrooms, practices included group work, providing opportunities to be engaged in rigorous tasks, turn and talk discussion, self-regulation, and perseverance in completing tasks. Teachers stated that the daily use of Class Dojo, an online reporting system with screenshots aligned to Academic Personal Behaviors (APB) support students in their ability to develop skills, mindsets, and behaviors. All students participate in Restorative Circles to build classroom community and trust throughout the school year. Students were observed being kind to others in a grade five class as they prepared for distribution of report cards, and Student Led Conferences (SLC). Students stated that this practice helps them gain confidence, support their peers, build community in the classroom and a sense of belonging in their school. This results in students preparing for SLC by evaluating their progress, and creating attainable goals.
Additional Finding

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

**Findings**
School leaders utilize the Danielson *Framework for Teaching* and provide teachers with immediate feedback. Advance observation data informs teachers’ professional learning, teacher assignments, and succession plans.

**Impact**
School leaders ensure that feedback articulates clear expectations for teacher practice that supports and promotes their professional growth. Professional learning is effectively developing teacher leadership capacity and informing teacher assignments resulting in the improved quality of student work.

**Supporting Evidence**

- The principal begins each year by implementing initial planning conferences (IPCs) with teachers. During IPCs, teachers complete observation forms indicating their evaluation option. Using the school level Measures of Teacher Practice (MOTP) summary report enables the school leaders and teachers to see at a glance those areas that a teacher needs to improve. Teachers are encouraged to identify their own strengths and areas in need of improvement. Based upon the data, they design individualized professional learning goals and personalized professional learning plans aligned to the school goals. A review of documents revealed that teachers engage in on-going self-reflection based on their individualized goals and personalized learning plans. A report for a highly effective teacher reads, “thank you for meeting with me for our initial planning conference. Based on last year’s data you selected the following professional goal: Using Assessment in Instruction (3d). As part of your personalized professional learning plan, you stated that your best way of improving practice included researching resources and participating in inter-visitation. Thank you for initiating an inter-visitation where you observed checks for understanding. In your Start, Stop, Continue Evaluation Sheet, you indicated that your next step is to allow students to assess themselves while working on a problem.”

- Teachers reported, and documents reviewed, confirmed that recommendations received in observation reports consistently provide examples of effective practice and recommendations for next steps. For example, one report’s feedback stated that the teacher “immediately utilize data from formative assessments within the lesson. Moving forward, please record and utilize formative assessment data to assess the degree of every student’s understanding during the lesson. Then, analyze the evidence and adjust instruction accordingly. Please refer to the resource attached, “Checking for Understanding: Formative Assessment Techniques for Your Classroom,” by Douglas Fisher and Nancy Frey. Teachers believe the clear feedback provided has allowed them to be reflective and hone in on specific areas to address. This has resulted in improved teacher practice as evidenced in increased levels in evaluations in Advance data.

- Teachers receive additional support from their peers through teacher-led professional development sessions. The approach to professional learning includes inter-visitations within the school and off site along with coaching sessions that focus on questioning, using assessments in instruction, and a new math model. Professional learning sessions are designed and facilitated to improve teacher practice and to develop leadership capacity. For example, lead teachers supported their peers in unpacking and implementing math content using Algebra for All.