Quality Review Report

2018-2019

I.S. 061 William A Morris
Junior High-Intermediate-Middle 31R061
445 Castleton Avenue
Staten Island
NY 10301

Principal: Susan Tronolone

Dates of Review:
November 13, 2018 - November 14, 2018

Lead Reviewer: Buffie Whitfield
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>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>To what extent does the school...</td>
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</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>Proficient</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
## School Quality Ratings continued

### School Culture

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

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Area</th>
<th>Rating</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
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<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>Area of Celebration</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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</table>

### 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>
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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>Additional Finding</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>Area of Focus</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Area of Celebration

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Quality Indicator:</th>
<th>1.4 Positive Learning Environment</th>
<th>Rating:</th>
<th>Well Developed</th>
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</table>

Findings

A highly supportive and extended family culture is evident throughout the school. Social emotional structures such as, the Positive Behavior Intervention Services (PBIS) protocol are in place and consistently employed.

Impact

Due to the warm and nurturing school environment and the effective social and emotional structures that are implemented students are adopting effective academic and personal behaviors.

Supporting Evidence

- The mantra of the William A. Morris Middle School is the appreciation of the diversity that is present throughout the school community. Across all grades and throughout each classroom a warm and nurturing environment is apparent. Respect for students and families were confirmed in the conversations conducted with parents and students. Several adults, including school leaders who demonstrate positive rapport with students, know all students. Both parents and students believe that school leaders and staff communicate high expectations for all learners and care deeply about their progress and success. For example, students shared that they have several adults that they can go to if they need help whether it involves academic or social emotional support.

- Students stated that they enjoy coming to school. They feel they are safe and are able to speak to any adult in the building. Student opinion is taken seriously. The school has structures in place to ensure that students’ social emotional learning needs are well met. The guidance counselor, attendance teacher and parent coordinator work as a team to support students and encourage the school’s 91 percent attendance rate. Through PBIS, students learn how to express their feelings, frustrations and how to complement each other in a caring and respectful manner. The positive impact of this curriculum is evident in the cafeteria and at recess. The parent coordinator, teachers and guidance staff facilitate various workshops such as, helping your child with home assignments and partner with parents to aid in academic and social emotional achievement. The school has extensive after-school programs such as homework help and access to resources; test prep programs, and arts enrichment programs. During the last school year total suspensions decreased over 40 percent attesting to the effectiveness of the systems and structures being employed.

- Students overwhelmingly agree all members of their learning community treat them with respect. Several students expressed, “I feel respected and love sharing our school with a district 75 program.” Another student shared they are proud to be an inclusive community. Other students shared that they are taught to be leaders. All students were proud of their school and recognized that they embrace and “celebrate diversity.” Students shared that their talents are demonstrated in the magnet program. “I used to be shy but through dance I am able to command a room.” Another student shared I came out of my shell because of band. Other students echoed with this mantra how their emotional maturity increased as a result of the inclusive environment of William A. Morris.”
Area of Focus

| Quality Indicator: | 5.1 Monitoring and Revising Systems | Rating: | Proficient |

Findings

School leaders have a process, which includes weekly cabinet meetings to regularly evaluate and adjust curricula, pedagogy, and assessment practices in response to student learning needs. School leaders and teachers have a process in place to review the quality of professional development practices.

Impact

Although school leaders and staff have a protocol to monitor and adjust systems and practices related to Common Core learning standards, as yet what is necessary to affect student mastery is not in place.

Supporting Evidence

- School leaders have been effective in refining their capacity for improvement by supporting the work of collaborative teacher teams both horizontally and vertically. These teams have streamlined their planning and inquiry by routinely analyzing student work using research-based protocols and utilizing the results to make curricula and instructional adjustments in response to student learning needs. During cabinet meetings school leaders review the agendas, minutes, and recommendations of teacher teams in an effort to coherently integrate the Common Core Learning Standards. However, while the principal speaks to processes to evaluate instructional and organizational practices of the school, some of the interactions with teacher teams have not been memorialized or recorded consistently. As a result, there are missed opportunities to effect more timely revisions to curriculum and teacher practice.

- School leaders observe teachers frequently. In some cases, administrators are not normed or calibrated in their feedback. School leaders are creating an observation chart to monitor and evaluate pedagogical feedback. Additionally, although teachers are involved in an inquiry group to improve students’ academic outcomes, protocols to share team findings on an ongoing basis are less formalized. This limits teachers' capacity to fully evaluate students’ varied learning needs and make additional data-informed decisions on implementing new instructional approaches that maximize students’ achievement across content areas and support student mastery.

- The use of resources, including programs, instructional materials, technology, professional development and other decisions align to the school’s goals and overall mission via conversations with the instructional cabinet. Most systems and structures for improvement are helping increase coherence of the use of resources, professional development work, and the efficacy of teacher teams across the school, so that more students demonstrate mastery of the Common Core standards.
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 have adopted a Common Core Learning Standards’-aligned curricula, which integrate a focus on non-fiction and content-area vocabulary. Curricular and academic tasks are planned and refined using student work and data for a diverse group of students.

Impact

The school’s purposeful decisions build curricular coherence and promote college and career readiness for all students. Structured collaboration to refine curricula and academic tasks across grades and content areas ensures that diverse student groups are cognitively engaged.

Supporting Evidence

- School leaders and faculty have adapted the curricula to meet student needs and have adjusted the unit plans based on student data and student work. In English Language Arts (ELA), teachers designed their own curriculum using additional resources such as Expeditionary Learning and EngageNY to increase the amount of informational and non-fiction text that students read. All curricula have been adjusted to meet the needs of all learners, including English Language Learners (ELLs) and students with disabilities. Visual aids, sentence frames, manipulatives, and technology supports are incorporated in units and lesson plans. Teachers include tiered vocabulary, skills, and unit goals aligned to differentiated learning tasks in unit plans. Across all content areas and grades, instructional planning documents reflect the components of the workshop model including the mini-lesson, guided practice and independent or group tasks.

- Teachers embed differentiated teaching strategies into unit plans to ensure all learners, including ELLs and students with disabilities, gain access to the content. The review of instructional planning documents revealed that lessons and academic tasks include integration of the instructional shifts. A grade six ELA unit plan requires students to determine central ideas or themes of a text, analyze their development, and summarize the key supporting details. As a result of a collaborative approach to instructional planning across grade levels and subjects a coherent curriculum exists where students are receiving instruction, which promotes college and career readiness.

- School leaders and teachers reported that teachers plan and refine curricula by working collaboratively in horizontal and vertical teams. Teacher teams meet regularly to refine Common Core-aligned units of study, using performance data. Teachers analyze students’ work to modify tasks for ELLs and students with disabilities. As a result, teachers adjust their planning documents, which reflect that students are placed in small groups based on their identified gaps in understanding. In addition, modifications to the curriculum include additional strategies and practices such as the use of thinking maps, developing reading fluency, images, visual cues, and graphic organizers to aid student comprehension. Evidence of the positive impact of these practices is validated in the three percent increase in student performance on the 2017-2018 ELA State examination from 32 percent to 35 percent in proficiency.
### Findings

Teaching practices are informed by the Danielson *Framework* and reflect the belief that students learn best when they engage in differentiated academic tasks. Teachers provide multiple entry points and supports for students to access the curricula.

### Impact

Students are engaged in suitably challenging tasks and produce meaningful work products that push them toward their learning targets and goals.

### Supporting Evidence

- School leaders’ and teachers’ belief regarding how students learn best is informed by the school’s instructional focus centered on students participating in differentiated learning to promote ownership. Across classes, students engaged in complex tasks such as multi-step problem solving and demonstrated the ability to use accountable talk in their interactions, which in most cases lead to facilitating their own learning.

- Across classrooms, lessons incorporated scaffolds and various learning supports providing multiple entry points and ensuring all learners were actively challenged and engaged. In the classrooms visited, most teachers provided guiding questions, which required students to think deeply about the concepts and skills taught. However, in a few classrooms there were limited opportunities for students to challenge each other’s thinking through high level peer-to-peer questioning during discussions. In a social studies class, students were assigned to answer several parts of a question. Some students within their group completed the task and sat waiting for their group mates to complete their question. In other classes not all students were involved in teacher-student question and answer sequences and this limited the opportunity for other students to participate actively.

- The use of extensions to deepen student engagement in challenging work was evident in several classrooms. For example, in a math class students worked with peers on solving word problems. Students studied the problem to figure out the next steps. The teacher challenged the students by asking if their solution is reasonable and if it makes sense providing an explanation for their thinking. Additionally, in an ELA class, the teacher pushed students to prove their claims. Students engaged in differentiated learning stations where they cited several pieces of textual evidence to support analysis of the text and what inferences could be drawn from the objective summary of the text.
Additional Finding

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

Common assessments, such as pre and post unit assessments, are employed to gauge student progress toward meeting goals across grades and subjects. Teachers use frequent checks for understanding and students self-assess their work.

Impact

Student progress is demonstrated through these regular assessments. Teachers’ frequent checks for understanding result in effective adjustments to curricula and instruction meeting all students’ learning needs.

Supporting Evidence

- Grade and content meetings afford teachers opportunities to collaboratively create assessments and rubrics. Teachers design common assessments and pre and post unit assessments aligned to the curriculum and schoolwide goals. The results of these assessments serve as barometers of student progress. The analysis of the data results in strategic adjustments to the curricula as indicated. For example, teachers review the interim assessments to determine areas for re-teaching. In an English Language Arts class the assessment was used to help students to plan their answers to an essay prompt, determine the need to use a graphic organizer, use close-reading techniques for the prompt, and review the rubric to ensure students knew how they were graded.

- Teacher-created benchmark assessments in English Language Arts and math are aligned to the Common Core Learning Standards (CCLS). These assessments provide content-specific measurement of student achievement regarding strategies and concepts resulting in ongoing adjustments to instructional practices and development of feedback that promotes student awareness of next steps to improve their learning. Other assessments, including school-designed pre and post unit assessments across all content areas provide teachers with additional data to inform adjustments to meet students’ needs. As teachers look at these results, they continue to hold data talks to identify instructional trends which inform action plans used to develop purposeful learning groups to ensure meeting all student’s learning needs.

- Across classrooms, teachers were observed using whole-class questioning and exit slips to check for understanding. Most teachers have an assessment tool to record students’ responses and, in some cases, teachers made on-the-spot adjustments to instruction. In a grade eight ELA class the teacher noticed that some students were having difficulty accomplishing their tasks. The teacher paused the class, clarified misconceptions, asked questions to ensure understanding, and then resumed the small group activity. In a Science class, teachers circulated about the room checking on students’ progress towards their tasks, and then, based on their findings, regrouped some students for a small-group session with a teacher. However, this level of effectively implementing the use of checks for understanding is yet to be fully implemented in the vast majority of classrooms.
### Additional Finding

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<tr>
<th>Quality Indicator:</th>
<th>4.2 Teacher Teams and Leadership Development</th>
<th>Rating: Proficient</th>
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**Findings**

School leaders ensure that teachers across grade levels engage in structured vertical, horizontal, Pupil Personnel, and School Implementation teams. Distributed leadership structures are in place.

**Impact**

Cross-functional professional collaborations have resulted in improved teacher practice. Teachers have built leadership capacity and have a voice in key decisions that affect student learning across the school.

**Supporting Evidence**

- During grade meetings and department meetings teachers discuss assessments and findings from student work to determine instructional areas of focus across grades. Teachers collaborate in teams based on the grade they teach, the subject they teach, or the school governing committee they chose to join. In addition to grade teams and departmental teams, there are also the Pupil Personnel Team, and School Implementation Team. Teachers meet regularly during their weekly common planning time. Teachers articulated that the structured collaboration helps to develop their practice and align expectations across departments. They stated that meetings allow them an opportunity to review data with the goal of developing intervention plans and effective strategies. Teachers explained that this collaboration helps them to develop shared language and common expectations leading to improved teaching practices.

- Teachers are provided with an opportunity to attend professional development sessions outside of the school and are expected to share and turnkey their learning with their colleagues during team meetings. Guidance counselors, the social worker, the dean, and classroom teachers meet to assess student work, plan learning activities within units of study, and discuss student progress. Teachers appreciate this extended time to work together with colleagues. Grade-level leaders and content area teachers use team meetings to make decisions that are then proposed to the school leaders for school wide initiatives. For example, teachers schedule visits to one another’s classrooms, provide instructional materials and documents for one another, and give each other feedback on strategies in their classrooms. Additionally, teachers utilize protocols such as the Evidence, Analysis, Action to make these instructional adjustments. As a result, teacher leadership is being strengthened school wide as teachers collaborate on a regular basis and contribute to key decisions that affect student learning.

- In the meeting, teachers shared apparent students’ misconceptions of mathematical terms and the lack of fluency in the use of academic language in written responses related to ratio concepts and applied reasoning. Teachers generated a list of instructional strategies, such as annotating word problems, to improve upon students’ ability to synthesize prior learning and apply new knowledge. One teacher described satisfaction with teacher leadership structures as; “Collaboration is our primary work; to collectively decide what can be done differently in teaching to bridge learning and close gaps in our instruction.” Collaborating in this manner has improved teacher capacity and student learning outcomes.