Quality Review Report

2018-2019

P.S./M.S. 280 Mosholu Parkway
K-8 10X280
3202 Steuben Avenue
Bronx
NY 10467

Principal: James Weeks

Dates of Review:
January 23, 2019 - January 24, 2019

Lead Reviewer: Jorge Estrella
The Quality Review Report

The Quality Review is a two-day school visit by an experienced educator. During the review, the reviewer visits classrooms, talks with parents, students, teachers, and school leaders and uses a rubric to evaluate how well the school is organized to support student achievement.

The Quality Review Report provides a rating for all ten indicators of the Quality Review Rubric in three categories: Instructional Core, School Culture, and Systems for Improvement. One indicator is identified as the Area of Celebration to highlight an area in which the school does well to support student learning and achievement. One indicator is identified as the Area of Focus to highlight an area the school should work on to support student learning and achievement. The remaining indicators are identified as Additional Finding. This report presents written findings, impact, and site-specific supporting evidence for six indicators.

Information about the School


School Quality Ratings

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Instructional Core</th>
<th>Area</th>
<th>Rating</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>To what extent does the school...</strong></td>
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<tr>
<td>1.1 Ensure engaging, rigorous, and coherent curricula in all subjects, accessible for a variety of learners and aligned to Common Core Learning Standards and/or content standards</td>
<td>Additional Finding</td>
<td>Proficient</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1.2 Develop teacher pedagogy from a coherent set of beliefs about how students learn best that is informed by the instructional shifts and Danielson Framework for Teaching, aligned to the curricula, engaging, and meets the needs of all learners so that all students produce meaningful work products</td>
<td>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>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
### School Culture

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Area</th>
<th>Rating</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1.4</td>
<td>Maintain a culture of mutual trust and positive attitudes that supports the academic and personal growth of students and adults</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Area of Celebration</td>
<td>Well Developed</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3.4</td>
<td>Establish a culture for learning that communicates high expectations to staff, students and families, and provide supports to achieve those expectations</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Additional Finding</td>
<td>Well Developed</td>
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### Systems for Improvement

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Area</th>
<th>Rating</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1.3</td>
<td>Make strategic organizational decisions to support the school’s instructional goals and meet student learning needs, as evidenced by meaningful student work products</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Additional Finding</td>
<td>Well Developed</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3.1</td>
<td>Establish a coherent vision of school improvement that is reflected in a short list of focused, data-based goals that are tracked for progress and are understood and supported by the entire school community</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Additional Finding</td>
<td>Proficient</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4.1</td>
<td>Observe teachers using the Danielson Framework for Teaching along with the analysis of learning outcomes to elevate school-wide instructional practices and implement strategies that promote professional growth and reflection</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Additional Finding</td>
<td>Proficient</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4.2</td>
<td>Engage in structured professional collaborations on teams using an inquiry approach that promotes shared leadership and focuses on improved student learning</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Additional Finding</td>
<td>Well Developed</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5.1</td>
<td>Evaluate the quality of school-level decisions, making adjustments as needed to increase the coherence of policies and practices across the school, with particular attention to the CCLS</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Additional Finding</td>
<td>Proficient</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>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>

Findings

The school’s theory of action incorporates core values that promote an inclusive and nurturing environment that is reflected in the curriculum. School structures are in place that allow each student to be well known by at least one adult.

Impact

A schoolwide culture of both mutual trust and social-emotional support structures results in a safe and inclusive environment. Weekly advisories support the academic and personal growth of students and meaningfully involve student voice in guiding school improvement efforts.

Supporting Evidence

- All members of the school community believe that building a strong culture is essential to creating a positive learning environment. This theory of action is grounded on the P.A.W.S. practice of student behavior: positive attitude, act responsibly, work together, and show respect. Student of the month is awarded to one student per classroom who exemplifies these values. Students shared that teachers have created a sense of mutual respect in the school. One student said, “I am in this school since kindergarten and teachers know my areas of strengths and challenges and recognize them. This makes me feel welcomed, respected, and motivates me to do my best and show respect to all my teachers and classmates.” Other students agreed with this statement and indicated that they have had similar experiences. Teachers disclosed that this sense of mutual respect is a result of a long-term work on increasing student persistence and engagement through teachers’ consistently demonstrating knowledge of the individual students they serve. Parents shared that school leaders and teachers ensure a safe school environment where students are free from harassment or bullying. The Online Occurrence Reporting System data shows a 34 percent reduction of disciplinary year-to-date infractions in January 2019 when compared to January 2018.

- Students have multiple opportunities to participate in decision-making for schoolwide activities. One structure is the student council, with all classrooms having elected representatives who meet weekly to discuss ideas and concerns regarding school improvement. Outcomes of these meetings have included the implementation of weekly announcements, word of the week, coordinated school spirit days, and holiday food drives. During instruction, students have opportunities to work in structured small group settings where each student plays a leadership role. Students also engage in reciprocal teaching, supporting their peers in the learning process, such as identifying problem-solving strategies, using textual evidence to support claims, and providing native language support to classmates. Students reported that they were reading books from African-American, European, and Latino authors and feel represented and respected, regardless their background. These actions have reinforced the school's value of ensuring that student voice is included and helps guide the decision-making and planning process.

- As part of the school leaders’ commitment to provide high levels of support to address the social-emotional needs of the students, the school organization reflects grade-band structures. These consist of teacher-teams, coaches, a guidance counselor, and an assistant principal who ensure that each child is well known by at least one adult. Also, all students have weekly advisory sessions. If necessary, students and/or families are referred to a community-based organization to provide them with the necessary services and supports to address the social-emotional needs of the student. An attendance team works with school leaders and counselors to support at-risk students, especially chronically absent students, developing individual attendance plans and monitoring each student's academic performance. Students further demonstrate their positive attitude toward their school through their attendance rate, which is at 94.3 percent year to date.
Findings
Across classrooms, teachers use assessments, rubrics, and grading policies that are aligned with curricula. Teachers' assessment practices consistently reflect the use of hand gestures, midway checks and exit tickets for ongoing checks for understanding as well as student self-assessment using checklists.

Impact
Most teachers' assessment practices result in effective instructional adjustments during classroom instruction, but some missed opportunities to provide actionable feedback or use assessments to adjust instruction were observed. Feedback is not consistently meaningful.

Supporting Evidence
- Most teachers use rubrics across grades and subject areas to provide actionable feedback to students, noting strengths and next steps. Thus, students are aware of their progress and cognizant of the connections between tasks and the expectations of the Common Core Learning Standards. Rubrics describe the performance expectations for all assignments. For instance, a social studies rubric for a Native American project allowed teachers and students to assess work based on content overview, media (pictures), design (overview), and writing (word choice, creativity, originality). A math rubric assesses the student's level of understanding of a problem, strategies used, different approaches to solve a problem, ability to explain why the answer makes sense, ability to teach to peers, and use of academic language. Students shared that using rubrics helps them have detailed understanding of their progress towards their instructional goals.
- Bulletin boards in classrooms and hallways reflect the use of Common Core-aligned rubrics to evaluate progress across subjects and grades. Most of the work samples displayed contained rubric-based feedback, via teacher comments with next steps for students to improve their work. While most teachers provided feedback to students on work samples reviewed, in some cases, the quality of the feedback was not always meaningful across classrooms. Two examples of feedback were, “You have strong details and accurate answers, but you almost give too much. Next time stick to one opinion of the author and focus on supporting that with text evidence,” and “you did a great job of breaking down the problem. Next time, continue to label your steps.” However, other student work still contains only percentages, highlighted or circled rubrics, or a comment such as “good job.” As a result, some students are not receiving meaningful, actionable feedback to meet their instructional goals.
- School leaders and teachers reported that part of expectations for the use of formative assessment is a midway check for understanding during the lesson to make on-the-spot adjustments. For example, in an ICT fifth-grade ELA class, students were reading “Progressive Era: The Roaring Twenties.” The task was to use evidence to support their thinking when analyzing a text during their reciprocal teaching session. Teachers circulated about the room, gathered data from their interactions with students, and assigned students to groups. Teachers continued moving around and conferencing with students. Then, teachers stopped and did another check for understanding using fist to five, recorded students’ responses, and reassigned students to another group or to work with the teacher. A similar approach was observed in an eighth-grade math class and in a fourth-grade math class. However, this practice of ongoing checks for understanding has yet to be implemented by the vast majority of teachers.
- Students reported that they use rubrics, check lists, exit tickets, and reflection sheets to engage in self-assessment activities. This was observed in most classrooms visited and also in work products presented by students. For example, one student wrote in his reflection sheet, “I feel more comfortable with scientific notations. I made minor mistakes that I can fix now.”
Findings

School leaders and faculty ensure that curricula and academic tasks are aligned to the Common Core and integrate the instructional shifts, including using text-based evidence and developing academic vocabulary across grades and content areas. Units and lessons are planned and refined using student work and data.

Impact

The school’s curricula design approach to learning is cohesive and cognitively engaging. Ongoing adjustments to curricula and tasks result in students having access to the necessary academic skills for college and career readiness.

Supporting Evidence

- School leaders and teachers align the curricula to the Common Core and have made purposeful decisions to embed the instructional shifts in English Language Arts (ELA) and math. School leaders and teacher-teams conduct a trends analysis of student performance on State assessments at the beginning of the year to identify standards areas in need of improvement and gaps in instruction. Teams adjust unit plans accordingly by switching units on the pacing calendar and supplementing instruction based on need. Instructional planning documents revealed that units of study and lesson plans include the instructional shifts, such as requiring students to write from sources, cite text-based evidence, use academic language, and engage in quality discussions. A math unit plan incorporated instructional shifts such as fluency, application, and conceptual understanding. For example, students have to write an equation, solve multi-step equations and word problems, solve systems by graphing, and assess reasonable answers using error analysis and focused conversations with their peers.

- Instructional planning documents across content areas include several instructional methods for vocabulary development. Activities taken from “Word Work and Word Play,” a DOE vocabulary resource, are incorporated into ELA, math, science, and social studies lessons, as are the use of word walls focusing in Tier II and Tier III words. Most lessons focus on the importance of vocabulary to ensure comprehension and awareness of words and their usage during independent/guided reading and group discussions. Students shared that in addition to vocabulary development strategies across grades and content areas, they use an essay protocol where they restate question, answer completely, cite evidence, and explain (RACE). As a result, of these coherent practices, the school curricula prepare all students for college and career.

- A review of instructional planning documents revealed that teachers are using summative and formative assessments to refine their lesson plans. A first-grade Integrated Co-Teaching (ICT) math lesson plan includes teaching strategies with multiple entry points, differentiation, and scaffolds for students. Students will be grouped and assigned tasks using manipulatives, tablets, cards, dominoes, and guided practice by the teacher, based on the lesson's midway check level. A second-grade ELA lesson plan reflects that teachers used reading assessment data to include differentiated activities for small group sessions, such as having the main reading selection on audio, providing sentence starters to build academic language and facilitate conversation, modifying text according to each student’s individual English proficiency levels, and offering think-pair-share activities requiring students to infer. As a result, all students will have access to cognitively engaging curricula.
Findings
Across classrooms, pedagogy focuses on engaging students in discussions and on rigorous tasks informed by the Danielson *Framework for Teaching* and the instructional shifts. Across classrooms, teaching strategies and the use of technology consistently provide multiple entry points into the curricula.

Impact
All students, including students with disabilities and ELLs, are engaged in challenging tasks that result in their demonstrating higher-order thinking in their work products.

Supporting Evidence
- The school's instructional focus is grounded on incorporating advanced literacy across subject areas through discussions, engaging students in small group instruction, and using formative assessment. The common beliefs about how students learn best is informed by the Danielson *Framework for Teaching*, which includes use of academic vocabulary, reciprocal teaching, and deepening discussions to promote critical thinking, all of which are embedded in instructional practices across classrooms. In addition, most classrooms displayed print rich resources such as process charts, word walls, sentence starters, anchor texts, and progress charts. Also, classrooms are equipped with whiteboards, document cameras, tablets, desktops, and laptops to support students' achievement. Within the classroom setting, students have opportunities to work in groups, pairs, or independently. During classroom visits, teachers were observed working with students in guided practice or having students demonstrate their understanding by working on tasks. For example, in a seventh-grade self-contained special education math class, the lesson about solving multi-step equations featured students engaged in student-centered discussions using accountable talk stems to support their thinking and using academic vocabulary in their group discussions. The teacher provided feedback about their questions.

- Across classrooms, teachers scaffold instruction and consistently provide multiple entry points to facilitate student participation through flexible grouping, manipulatives, graphic organizers, technology, and real-life activities. Students worked in groups and had opportunities to solve problems on their own or with peers. In a seventh-grade social studies class, students were engaged in group discussions about the conflicts between the colonists and the British after the French and Indian War. For this activity, ELLs had access to translated documents, visuals, graphic organizers, and opportunities to work with advanced bilingual peers to support their progress towards deeper understanding of the task. Students with disabilities had access to sentence stems and guided questions. As a result of these teaching strategies, all students had opportunities to engage in higher-order thinking and make their thinking visible.

- In most classes, students have access to folders with extension activities to choose from when they finish working. For example, in a fourth-grade math class, students were solving mixed number problems, and, upon completing their task, they went to the resource center to pick-up challenging problems around the same topic. Other students continued working on their exercises while the teacher offered support to a small group of students or circulated about the room to ensure students’ engagement and progress towards their learning targets. In most classrooms, students were observed engaging in reciprocal teaching, where they become the teacher in small group sessions. Another strategy observed in group activities was the assigning of students to specific roles, such as predictor, classifier, questioner, and summarizer. During small group sessions, students were observed using a Chalk Talk Routine, where they drafted their ideas about their topics on chart paper, which helped guide their thinking and discussion, as well as facilitating the sharing of information with the class.
Additional Finding

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

School leaders consistently communicate high expectations to staff that are aligned to the Danielson Framework for Teaching through one-to-one conferences, conventional and teacher-driven professional development (PD), and other forms of communication. High expectations connected to a path to college and career readiness are effectively communicated by school leaders and teachers to families.

Impact

Effective communication and support to meet high expectations for all staff foster mutual accountability for improving teaching and learning across the school. Strong partnerships among staff and families contribute to student progress in meeting high expectations for learning.

Supporting Evidence

- At the beginning of the school year, school leaders clearly articulate professional and pedagogic expectations for teachers informed by the Danielson Framework for Teaching. This is supported through the staff handbook, emails, one-on-one conferences, and "The Weekly Update," which is used to inform teachers about schoolwide events related to instruction, school environment, and parent engagement. School leaders and teachers collaborate to ensure strategic, school-based PD aligned to the Danielson Framework for Teaching, with all teachers having multiple opportunities for PD to improve their instructional practices. PD plans indicate that teachers engage in intervisitation, teacher-driven observations, and Un-Conferences. The Un-Conference is a teacher-driven professional learning collaboration where they use their professional periods to discuss instructional practices and student instructional and behavioral outcomes as well as to plan and execute demo lessons. Teachers articulated that this form of professional collaboration has helped them share strategies with their peers and try new ideas in the classroom.

- Teachers shared that school leaders provide them with meaningful and actionable feedback from regularly scheduled observations. In this process, leaders collect and review student work products and data from the school's online assessment platform, offering teachers feedback in the form of next steps and instructional resources. For example, in one observation report where the teacher was rated effective in questioning and discussion techniques, the feedback stated, "You will need to refine your classroom questioning and discussion routines, so that students may be able to extend the discussions, challenge another's thinking, and even themselves be the ones to initiate high-order questions. Refer to previous PD." A subsequent observation report for the same teacher included a highly-effective rating in questioning and discussions techniques. Thus, there is a mutual accountability for supporting teachers to reach high expectations for student success.

- School leaders and staff communicate with parents about academic and behavioral expectations connected to a path to college and career readiness by providing regular feedback in the form of reports cards, progress reports with next steps, curriculum orientation sessions, calendars, emails, and an online grading platform. Teachers reported that sending translated documents to parents has helped strengthen their partnership. Parents conveyed that this year's expectations are more rigorous and that the school helps each child meet them through teaching strategies. Parents also reported that the approach to teaching math is different than when they were in the school, with students applying more critical thinking and explaining their answers. To help parents support their children at home, the school offers math workshops to familiarize parents with the curriculum and strategies used to teach math. In the 2018 school survey, 94 percent of families say that they have communicated with their child's teacher about performance, which is higher than the district and city results. Consequently, the school successfully partners with families to support all students in their work to meet high expectations and move towards college and career readiness.
Teacher teams strengthen instructional capacity through the systematic analysis of teaching practices, assessment data, and student work. Teachers report being empowered to positively affect student learning through embedded structures such as instructional coaches.

Impact

Teacher teams’ analysis of data resulted in shared improvements in teacher practice and mastery of goals for groups of students across the school community. Strategic distributive leadership structures allow teachers to play an integral role in key decisions affecting student learning across the school.

Supporting Evidence

- Teacher teams meet weekly in grade and subject specific teams to analyze student work, identify student needs, and inform instructional targets for students. A fourth-grade math team was observed analyzing students' benchmark assessments on understanding of fractional equivalence and ordering. Teachers worked in pairs on identifying strengths and gaps. Then, teachers shared their findings and concluded that most of students’ work reviewed revealed that they have mastered using models to find equivalent fractions, a solid foundation using cross multiplication to find equivalent fractions, and comprehension of most problems. The team also identified common misconceptions, such as in interpreting inequalities, telling fractions that are more than one half, showing their work, explaining their thinking, and identifying benchmark fractions. As a result, teachers decided to provide students with manipulatives during small group instruction to help them with their misconceptions finding benchmark fractions. They also incorporated real-life experiences into lessons, used sentence starters, and conducted midway formative assessments. The use of these strategies was observed in two math classes where lessons were connected to real-life experiences, and students were at the mastery level in determining the solution to a system of equations by graphing. Teachers reported that their collaborative work helped them to reflect on their craft by sharing best practices with their colleagues.

- Teachers conduct regular benchmark and on-demand assessments within each unit of study to determine student mastery on power and focus standards within and across classrooms. All data gathered from those assessments are stored in an online assessment platform that provides teachers and school leaders with disaggregated data reports. Based on the second-grade ELA benchmark results on “Recall information from experiences,” only 29 percent of the students showed mastery. Then, as a result of the work of the teacher team, second-grade teachers decided to incorporate differentiated graphic organizers into the lessons and provide actionable feedback aligned to the rubrics, allowing students to reflect on and improve their writing. The mid-unit assessment data showed 50 percent mastery, and, by the end of the unit, student data reflected 58.3 percent mastery. Thus, through collaborative ongoing analysis of assessment data, teachers are improving the way they deliver instruction, resulting in increased student achievement.

- School leaders promote distributed leadership practices at the school through the multiple team structures and the support of instructional coaches, who meet twice a week with school leaders to plan PD cycles. Coaches meet with grade level teams weekly, to review student work, lead teacher teams through protocols for data-driven conversations, and record actionable feedback for the following week. Teachers reported that they are empowered to make curricular modifications, prepare assessments, facilitate professional development, participate in the hiring committee, and lead teacher-driven observations, schoolwide activities, and advisory. Thus, they have a voice in key school decisions affecting student learning.