Quality Review Report

2018-2019

P.S. 340
Elementary 10X340
25 West 195 Street
Bronx
NY 10468

Principal: Alexei Nichols

Dates of Review:
December 20, 2018 - December 21, 2018

Lead Reviewer: Elsa Kortright-Torres
The Quality Review Report

The Quality Review is a two-day school visit by an experienced educator. During the visit, 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

### Instructional Core

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th><strong>To what extent does the school...</strong></th>
<th><strong>Area</strong></th>
<th><strong>Rating</strong></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1.1 Ensure engaging, rigorous, and coherent curricula in all subjects, accessible for a variety of learners and aligned to Common Core Learning Standards and/or content standards</td>
<td>Area of Celebration</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>Well Developed</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>
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</tbody>
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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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</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>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>
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### Systems for Improvement

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

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

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

### Findings

School leaders and faculty ensure that curricula are aligned to the Common Core Learning Standards and strategically integrate the instructional shifts. Rigorous habits and higher-order skills are emphasized in curricular and academic tasks in a coherent way across grades and subjects.

### Impact

Coherent curricula across grades and content areas promote college and career readiness. All learners are expected to demonstrate their thinking.

### Supporting Evidence

- School leaders and faculty ensure that the curricula are aligned to Common Core Learning Standards. For example, the school plans units of study and lessons using the Teachers College Reading and Writing Program (TCRWP). A review of English Language Arts (ELA) units of study evidences the integration of the instructional shifts such as having students find textual evidence and the use of or exposure to complex text. Teachers use read complex text aloud to expose students to vocabulary and develop metacognitive skills by providing students with toolkits to help them understand tasks related to what they read. The use of the toolkits across grades and subject areas allows students to tackle tasks in any class or grade level independently or with partners, thus providing coherence that promotes college and career readiness.

- A review of units of study across subjects and grade levels reveals evidence of the strategic integration of the instructional shifts. For example, students had difficulty understanding vocabulary in stories which also affected understanding word problems. In response, teachers adjusted math units of study to provide a strategy that helped students visualize word problems and be able to solve them. Teachers developed the unpack, plan, execute, and check (UPEC) strategy. In the lower grade levels, students unpack, think about the context of the problem, draw the problem and confer with a partner to come up with a plan to solve the problem. Students are being taught to persevere in solving problems and thus reinforcing independence.

- Through an interdisciplinary approach, students are provided with rigorous tasks across grades that integrate application of real-life skills. For example, in a grade-five unit of study about argumentative writing, students are tasked with debating the question, Should there be zoos? Students are tasked with choosing a position, preparing their evidence, using debate prompts with sophisticated language, acknowledging a counterclaim, and reacting to an opponent. Students are tasked with completing a graphic organizer after reading two different articles and summarizing the important points of each article. After, students choose a position and justify it by using evidence from the text. In a second- and third-grade math unit on telling time and elapsed time, students were tasked with writing a story to show what the characters did during an elapsed amount of time. In a social studies grade-four lesson plan, students are tasked with making inferences about New York City, Mannahatta, by conducting a gallery walk of different images during the European Exploration period. Students are expected to make their thinking visible as they complete a graphic organizer with their observations, inferences, and wonderings. By integrating different subjects such as reading and writing skills in social studies, science, and mathematics, students engage in rigorous tasks and are encouraged to make their thinking visible.
**Area of Focus**

| Quality Indicator: | 3.1 Goals and Action Plans | Rating: Proficient |

**Findings**

School goals are implemented and monitored throughout the school year and adjustments are made as needed. Goals and action plans are informed by ongoing data-driven needs assessments.

**Impact**

Goals and action plans that are tracked for progress are used to drive schoolwide efforts to accelerate student learning, foster student social/emotional growth, and improve teacher practice. However, adjustments made to purposefully minimize the achievement gap for some subgroups of students have yet to be achieved.

**Supporting Evidence**

- There is a short list of focused goals that include cultivating a growth mindset to foster social emotional and culturally responsive pedagogical practices, and to analyze data to drive instructional decisions. This short list of goals is aligned to the Comprehensive Educational Plan (CEP) goals. The school tracks its progress toward achievement of school goals by analyzing schoolwide data such as Fountas and Pinnell reading levels, teacher performance data generated through Advance, the Online Occurrence Reporting System (OORS), parent and student feedback, attendance records, and Response to Intervention (RtI) data. According to school leaders, pedagogical practices are improving such as creating materials for students so that they are able to be more independent, and monitoring the effectiveness of teacher feedback to students by conducting learning walks. However, the school has yet to explicitly link the changes through action planning with next steps to accelerate students’ academic and social emotional learning.

- Through the School Leadership Team (SLT), school goals are created and monitored for progress. Teachers are provided with professional development for both social emotional learning and pedagogical practices based on a needs assessment informed by Advance data and student performance data. Teacher practice has improved according to the latest Advance report and, data from OORS has shown a decrease in serious behavioral incidents. The progress in teachers providing feedback and students using metacognitive skills while having discussions has been a focus for the school. Action planning around this goal includes the strategic implementation of learning walks that include calibrations with a focus on feedback. Teachers also conduct intervisitations to improve teacher practices in these areas. Teachers reported and all agreed that they have received embedded professional development through coaches and have collaborative time embedded in their schedules to adjust planning based on the needs of students to improve their practice.

- There is also evidence of professional development that is purposeful to improve teacher practice. School goals are monitored using data such as iReady for math and ELA with the ultimate goal of improving teacher practices. For example, after analyzing student data from iReady and other data, teachers and school leaders realized that there is a need to provide feedback that is actionable for students, improve vocabulary, and have student-to-student discussions to elevate students’ ability to make their thinking visible. To this end, teachers and staff members, collaborate to have a push-in model where teachers of other areas such as the English as a New Language (ENL) teacher and other special area teachers provide small group instruction in the classrooms. Though there have been various initiatives and professional development in response to the academic and social emotional needs of students and teacher practices reflect an improvement, these have yet to result in closing the achievement gap.
### Findings

Across the vast majority of classrooms, teaching practices are aligned to the curricula, reflecting a coherent set of beliefs about how students learn best. Across these same classrooms, teaching strategies strategically provide multiple entry points and high-quality supports.

### Impact

Teaching practices across the vast majority of classes reflect school beliefs that students learn best through active discussion, engagement, by using tools to be independent and espousing a growth mindset. Strategies additionally ensure that all learners, including ELLs and students with disabilities, are engaged in appropriately challenging tasks and demonstrate higher-order thinking skills.

### Supporting Evidence

- Across the vast majority of classrooms, students work in groups, engage in discussions, use tools to become independent learners, and engage in critical thinking tasks. Instructional practices reflect these beliefs and display elements of the Danielson *Framework for Teaching*. In a grade-five classroom students were arranged in small groups while they debated a topic related to two articles and used textual evidence to support their claims. In a grade-three classroom students worked in groups to solve a math word problem using the UPEC schoolwide strategy. Teachers tasked students with using the strategy and engaging in a math conversation using a tool *Keeping the Math Conversation Going* from their toolkit. Pedagogical practices corresponding to components 3b: Using Questioning and Discussion Techniques and 3c: Engaging Students in Learning are consistently rated as Highly Effective. Embedded in these practices, instructional shifts such as providing textual evidence and using academic vocabulary are promoted and intentionally discussed at team and school levels.

- In a grade-four social studies classroom, the teacher tasked students with engaging effectively in collaborative conversations to determine how European exploration impacted Mannahatta by using visual thinking strategies. Students analyzed an image from the history period by participating in a gallery walk. In a grade-three science classroom, the students used magnifying lenses as they investigated images of fruit flies to create a family tree. Students discussed traits inherited from each parent. Anchor charts to support students in using academic vocabulary and using textual evidence were evident in all classrooms. All classrooms are equipped with classroom libraries to support the TCRWP and math manipulatives. Teaching practices are rooted in helping students become independent learners by using a repertoire of tools and visuals.

- Throughout classrooms, teachers use multiple entry points such as visuals, technology, and toolkits so that students perform rigorous tasks and demonstrate their thinking. In an Integrated Co-Teaching (ICT) grade-five classroom, students learned about argumentative writing by working in groups debating about a question posted on a PowerPoint slide with illustrations about animals in the wild and in captivity. The students relied on anchor charts such as *How to Debate an Argument* posted in the classroom. Students provided evidence from the text that was appropriate for their reading level and if needed, used a tool from their toolkit titled “Useful Debate Sentence Stems.” In a self-contained classroom, students participated in Math Workshop led by the classroom teacher and paraprofessional. A group of students used manipulatives such as base ten blocks to learn about place value while the other group worked on weight by using a scale and objects to learn about kilograms and grams. Students’ work products from classrooms evidenced the use of multiple entry points such as visuals and Spanish translations that help all students demonstrate higher-order thinking skills and complete appropriately challenging tasks for all students.
Additional Finding

Quality Indicator: 

| 2.2 Assessment | Rating: Well Developed |

Findings

Across the vast majority of classrooms, rubrics, grading policies and assessments, including TCRWP and iReady diagnostic assessments, are aligned to curricula and provide a clear profile of student mastery of targeted skills. All teachers implement varied forms of ongoing assessment and use the resulting data to inform instructional adjustments and promote self-assessment by all students.

Impact

Assessment practices generate meaningful feedback about student achievement, which drives instructional adjustments that address student needs and results in student awareness of their next steps for progress in learning.

Supporting Evidence

- A review of student work evidences teachers’ actionable and meaningful feedback. For example, teachers use the TCRWP rubrics for narrative writing and provide actionable feedback in the form of glows and grows to students. In a grade-five unit on narrative writing the teacher used the TCRWP Narrative Writing Checklist. Students talk about how feedback from teachers and the use of checklists and rubrics guide their learning. Throughout the school, teachers use rubrics to provide feedback to students as well as rubrics for students to self-assess, peer-assess and create their own learning goals. In order to establish coherence of providing actionable feedback, teachers create labels to provide students glows and grows by using student-friendly language. In a grade-three portfolio of student work, students have a self-assessment record for each unit, personal narrative, opinion and information writing. Students write sentences such as “I need to describe how I felt” as a grow for a personal narrative assignment. A teacher wrote on a personal narrative piece of a student that the student included dialogue and a lot of detail to describe what was happening and as a grow to include an ending that describes how the writer is feeling.

- Students speak about receiving feedback that is meaningful. For example, a fifth-grade student spoke about ensuring that his evidence supports his thesis. He talked about receiving feedback from the teacher using the rubric to ensure that he is considering all the criteria to complete and receive a better grade. Students talked about receiving feedback from all their teachers that help improve their grades. Teachers use student work to provide feedback to all students. For example, on a bulletin board, teachers point out what students did well to help other students understand what they should consider to finish their assignment and obtain a better grade. One of the many comments observed was “Student elaborated by including facts” and “Student focused on what the audience cares about.” These statements guide students and provide exemplars to use in their writing.

- Teachers use trackers and frequent checks for understanding to make appropriate adjustments during instruction. In a fifth-grade classroom, the teacher used a tracker to check on each student’s progress. For example, in a debate on whether there should be zoos, some students were noted in her tracker as not using the vocabulary and opinion language stems. The teacher reviewed the opinion language stem tool and explained it to students to remind them to use it during group discussion. In a third-grade science lesson, the teacher conferred with students to check for understanding. She circulated and noticed that students were not describing in details the traits that fruit flies inherited from parents. She paused the class and explained that students should take a look at the pattern of the wings. As a result, students started using their magnifying glasses and found traits they had not noticed such traits as the patterns on the wings.
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
School leaders provide staff with embedded professional development and consistently communicate high expectations including those connected to college and career. Partnership with families provides ongoing feedback to help students become college and career ready.

Impact
A culture of mutual accountability exists among members of the school community, and partnerships with families support progress towards goals and expectations for college and careers.

Supporting Evidence

- School leaders begin the school year with a “State of the Union Conference” with teachers. School leaders and teachers go over expectations for the year such as having a growth mindset and to take the time during the first few weeks of schools to conduct growth mindset lessons. There are also non-negotiables that are introduced such as having students read independently on the first day of school and thereafter and conferring with students while recording their notes on the schoolwide reading logs. It is also made clear that the goal of the beginning of the school year is to get to know students with an emphasis on literacy and numeracy. A portion of the conference is also dedicated to analyzing state assessment data from the previous year. Next steps are also generated with opportunities to reflect and learn from the data by using protocols.

- School leaders and staff also prepare for a new year by creating coaching schedules, planning coaching sessions and instructional focus initiatives for the year. The staff prepares for the year with clear expectations around social emotional learning, assessments, data analysis and progress monitoring. Professionalism and instructional expectations rooted in the Danielson Framework for Teaching are communicated and learning is embedded throughout the school year by having learning walks. There is mutual accountability as a result of the learning walks as both school leaders and teachers participate and are responsible for coming up with glows, grows, and next steps. Teachers are also holding each other accountable by having responsibilities to plan lessons that are coherent, creating toolkits for students, and shared across collaborative teams. Students spoke about having these tools readily available in their native language and that these tools help them become better readers and problem solvers. Professional development for teachers is informed by their needs, student data and a system of accountability that is evident in documents such as the learning walks forms, Professional Learning Community (PLC) plans, and observation cycle.

- Parents consider themselves partners in their children’s education and it is evident in practices that promote college and career readiness for students. For example, parents are invited to join teachers in conducting learning walks. Parents get an opportunity to reflect on what they see and teachers help parents understand misconceptions and expectations for learning. In addition, several workshops for parents are planned and executed throughout the year. Parents reported that they have learning opportunities to help their own children at home and to encourage them to be successful and go to college. One parent reported that she learned about the toolkits that are created by teachers for students to use independently when in need of support. Such toolkits are brought home by the students and the parents understand their use and what students are expected to do. Parents also reported that the rigor of the units and lesson plans as well as the use of rubrics prepares their children for college level tasks.
### Additional Finding

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

The vast majority of teachers are engaged in inquiry-based, structured professional collaborations. Distributed leadership structures are embedded resulting in effective teacher leadership.

**Impact**

Collaborations within grade teams and the Teacher Leadership Program have strengthened teachers' instructional capacity resulting in schoolwide instructional coherence and student achievement. Teachers play an integral role in key decisions around professional learning and planning engaging lessons with appropriate tools for students to become independent learners.

**Supporting Evidence**

- Teachers engage in structured collaborations to promote the implementation of the Common Core and instructional shifts such as increasing academic vocabulary and conceptual understanding. For example, after completing modules one and two of the Eureka math program, a grade-five team met to discuss how to support students in solving math problems. Teachers analyzed the end of unit and exit slips data, its impact on student learning such as students beginning to show that they are understanding relationships between multiplication and division and displaying perseverance in solving problems. Teachers discussed what worked and used the *What? So What? Now What?* Protocol to plan their next steps. As a result, teachers plan to use strategies to help students interpret the remainder, use more academic vocabulary, and conduct a mini boot camp on fractions to prepare students for the next unit of study. Teachers discussed plans for struggling learners including grouping of students for small-group instruction.

- Teacher teams meet by grade levels and use the *What? So What? Now What?* Protocol that promotes collaborations using guiding questions such as *What are students able to do and need more practice with? What are the implications of the data? and What do we need to do differently?* In a grade-three ELA team meeting, teachers realized after examining student work that their students are able to organize information into subheadings and understand non-fiction text features but need to home in on cause and effect, note-taking when reading non-fiction, and using transition words. As a result, teachers planned on incorporating more research skills in their lessons and focusing on depth rather than breadth by teaching the important skills of the unit. A kindergarten team meeting discovered that their writing units moved too quickly and that students were not able to internalize and solidify foundational skills such as story structures and incorporating vowel sounds when stretching words. Teachers decided to modify the sequence of the units to ensure that students spend more time on crafting stories using what they know about narrative writing.

- Embedded distributive leadership structures such as having grade-level liaisons in the Teacher Leadership Program that also meets on a regular basis has resulted in teachers playing an integral role in key decisions that affect student learning. This team of teachers engages in inquiry and uses data to ensure that there is vertical coherence of teacher practices. For example, based on data and to address one of the instructional foci of the school, developing the capacity of students to become independent learners, toolkits were created for each student. Each student is equipped with a ring of different tools that include checklists, sentence stems and academic skill reminders that promote the school's beliefs. Teachers reported that they facilitate professional learning aligned to the school's instructional foci and have resulted in the creation of committees such as the School Wellness Council and the Teacher Leadership Program.