Quality Review Report

2018-2019

M.S. 390
Junior High-Intermediate-Middle 10X390

1930 Andrews Avenue
Bronx
NY 10453

Principal: Robert Mercedes

Dates of Review:
February 13, 2019 - February 14, 2019

Lead Reviewer: Buffie Whitfield
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

M.S. 390 serves students in grade 6 through grade 8. You will find information about this school, including enrollment, attendance, student demographics, and data regarding academic performance, at http://schools.nyc.gov/Accountability/tools/report/default.htm.

School Quality Ratings

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Instructional Core</th>
<th>Area</th>
<th>Rating</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>To what extent does the school...</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1.1 Ensure engaging, rigorous, and coherent curricula in all subjects, accessible for a variety of learners and aligned to Common Core Learning Standards and/or content standards</td>
<td>Additional Finding</td>
<td>Proficient</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1.2 Develop teacher pedagogy from a coherent set of beliefs about how students learn best that is informed by the instructional shifts and Danielson Framework for Teaching, aligned to the curricula, engaging, and meets the needs of all learners so that all students produce meaningful work products</td>
<td>Additional Finding</td>
<td>Proficient</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2.2 Align assessments to curricula, use on-going assessment and grading practices, and analyze information on student learning outcomes to adjust instructional decisions at the team and classroom levels</td>
<td>Additional Finding</td>
<td>Developing</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
## School Quality Ratings continued

### School Culture

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>To what extent does the school...</th>
<th>Area</th>
<th>Rating</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1.4 Maintain a culture of mutual trust and positive attitudes that supports the academic and personal growth of students and adults</td>
<td>Additional Finding</td>
<td>Proficient</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3.4 Establish a culture for learning that communicates high expectations to staff, students and families, and provide supports to achieve those expectations</td>
<td>Additional Finding</td>
<td>Proficient</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

### Systems for Improvement

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>To what extent does the school...</th>
<th>Area</th>
<th>Rating</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1.3 Make strategic organizational decisions to support the school's instructional goals and meet student learning needs, as evidenced by meaningful student work products</td>
<td>Area of Celebration</td>
<td>Proficient</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>
<td>Proficient</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4.1 Observe teachers using the Danielson Framework for Teaching along with the analysis of learning outcomes to elevate school-wide instructional practices and implement strategies that promote professional growth and reflection</td>
<td>Additional Finding</td>
<td>Proficient</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>
<td>Proficient</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>
<td>Developing</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Area of Celebration

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Quality Indicator:</th>
<th>1.3 Leveraging Resources</th>
<th>Rating:</th>
<th>Proficient</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>

**Findings**

The principal allocates human, fiscal, and physical resources to support the school’s organizational decisions that are aligned to the achievement of goals. School leaders have an effective way to hire teachers to support student program groupings and interventions.

**Impact**

Aligned resources promote overall learning goals as evidenced by students’ use of interactive whiteboards, tablets, and laptops to produce meaningful work products. Strategic assignment of teachers helps to close the achievement gap while effectively supporting access to learning opportunities that lead to college and career readiness for students, including English Language Learners (ELLs), and students with disabilities.

**Supporting Evidence**

- School leaders order supplies, hire consultants, and schedule monies that align to the goals and instructional focus of the school. Specifically, the principal has hired outside consultants to help train teachers. Per-session funding is purposefully allocated to enable teachers to participate in work that will help improve their pedagogical skills. Teachers shared that their ability to visit other schools and work with lead consultants are helping to deepen their understanding of Expeditionary Learning. As a result, teachers are seeing more students attempt to write and type quality essays based on research they conduct using technology supports.

- Needs analyses indicated that further attention to support student program groupings and interventions was necessary. A teacher dually certified in English as a New Language (ENL) and Spanish was hired to support a dedicated dual language program that is helping both ELLs and native English speakers to learn a new language. Materials, including online subscriptions and hard copies, are purchased in English and Spanish. Students are able to communicate and navigate online systems in both languages. In addition, the principal hired an additional guidance counselor to support the varying learning needs of students. The hiring committee makes recommendations for hiring and supports the coordination of teacher assignments to ensure that teachers work with students within their areas of expertise. As a result, students in these programs are able to engage in learning opportunities that will lead to greater college and career readiness.

- Due to the principal’s resourcefulness, he is able to support targeted intervention and also provide his community with a dual language program. Leaders have structured time to engage students in a reading software program. This is helping to close the achievement gap evidenced by the volume of writing and increased reading comprehension levels of students. Additionally, the school’s dual language program follows the 50/50 alternate day model, with teachers providing alternate day instruction in English and Spanish. In a key organizational decision, 18 new teachers were hired and a coach was assigned to all grades to provide early intervention and intensive instruction to students, including ELLs and students with disabilities, helping to close the achievement gap as evidenced by the positive student achievement seen in progress reports.
Area of Focus

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

Findings

School leaders are developing a process to regularly evaluate and adjust instructional practices that ensure rigor across all classrooms and effective teacher team work so that all students achieve mastery of Common Core Learning Standards goals.

Impact

There are missed opportunities to meet the needs of students through coherent policies and practices, and the lack of processes to evaluate and adjust instruction.

Supporting Evidence

- Weekly common planning meetings provide an opportunity for teachers to reflect on the curricula they have designed and also look at student work to assess challenges and determine adjustments needed. Teachers were unable to articulate the process of assessing curriculum alignment to the Common Core and overall curriculum implementation. Additionally, it was not clear that there are specific protocols in place for teachers to receive feedback around their curriculum maps. Teachers developed units of study alone and/or with consultants. The school community is developing a process to evaluate effectiveness. There is no formalized plan for teachers to meet in order to evaluate and adjust assessment, grading practices, curriculum, and instruction, or to meet the demands of Common Core standards and support the diverse learning needs of all students. There were highly inconsistent levels of rigor observed in the classes and/or the lack of checks for understanding across classrooms.

- School leaders observe teachers frequently. In some cases, their feedback is not normed or calibrated. Additionally, although teachers collaborate in inquiry groups 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 purposeful data-informed decisions on implementing new instructional approaches that maximize students’ achievement across content areas.

- The work of teacher teams is not being memorialized in a way that allows the staff to be reflective about practices, changes in practice, and where teachers are putting their focus in lesson planning and assessment. While teachers are making adjustments to individual lesson plans, they are not refining the curriculum maps with adjustments where they are made. Similarly, teachers are creating new assessments for students in team meetings, but this work is not housed or shared in formal ways that would enable them to memorialize the work of individual teachers or teams. This limits their ability to monitor their effectiveness and be reflective about practices that are working, and those that are not. While school leaders sometimes participate in meetings, other times the monitoring of teacher team work is left to the coach and curriculum developers, leading to a lack of consistency in creating coherence in teacher team work in curriculum and assessment practices. Combined with the teams’ shortcomings in memorializing their work, the school’s process for regularly evaluating the quality of teacher team work and organizational resources remains uneven.
Additional Finding

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

Findings

The curricula are aligned to the Common Core, and teachers make purposeful decisions to build coherence, with a particular focus on citing evidence from the text, building deep understanding in math, and strengthening student speaking and listening skills across the subject areas. Academic tasks consistently emphasize rigorous habits and higher-order skills across grades and subjects for all students, including ELLs and students with disabilities.

Impact

The school’s curricula are rigorous, coherent, and emphasize habits and higher-order skills that prepare all students for college and career across grades and subjects, including students with disabilities and ELLs.

Supporting Evidence

- A math unit plan details the key ideas and guiding/focus questions embedded in the unit. For example, two of the key ideas in a grade-six math unit are that multiplication and division are inverse operations and that division can be represented using multiple formats. Some of the guiding questions in this unit include, “How do we divide fractions?” and “How can we use models to divide fractions?” The unit goes on to describe the focus standards in the unit, as well as the foundational or pre-requisite standards from the prior grade that are needed for this current unit. By linking pre-requisite skills to new skills and by aligning the key ideas with the guiding questions in the unit, the plan is building coherence across grades and is supporting students with college and career readiness.

- A grade-six overview of an ENL unit of study describes foundational strategies, processes, and supports that are utilized for these students. Included in these strategies are descriptions of think-pair-share protocols, which are described as specific times during a lesson for students to engage in discussions of higher-order thinking questions with their partners before sharing out. The document describes the how and why students should engage in conversation. A lesson plan for a grade-eight ENL class reflects this emphasis on discussion, detailing in a group discussion section of the plan that "students work collaboratively to predict, summarize, make connections and pose questions about multiplying and dividing rational numbers."

- Teachers ensure rigorous habits and higher order skills for all students, including students with disabilities and ELLs with additional resources, such as the Middle School Quality Initiative, which consists of evidence based argumentative curriculum passages to ensure that students are engaged in appropriately challenging texts and tasks. This focus takes shape primarily through teacher lesson plans, where provisions for students with disabilities currently exist within the school’s curricula. As an example, a seventh grade English Language Arts (ELA) curriculum map highlights essential questions, standards, and student outcomes, as well as specific skills that all students are expected to master.
### Findings

Across classrooms, teaching practices, including questioning and scaffolds, are aligned to the curricula and reflect an articulated set of beliefs that students learn best through technology. Teaching strategies consistently provide multiple entry points into the curricula.

### Impact

Coherent teaching practices engage students in rigorous, Common Core-aligned tasks with scaffolds and supports that yield high levels of student thinking and meaningful work products for all learners, including students with disabilities and ELLs.

### Supporting Evidence

- School leaders and faculty believe that students learn best through collaborative learning using technology and where teachers act as facilitators. In all of the nine classes visited, across the subject areas, students used technology via interactive white boards, and/or tablets. In an ELA classes, students used the Light Sail program to support their reading. Students read independently for 25 minutes, annotated text, answered questions, and shared their thinking via the tablet.

- Across classrooms, teaching strategies to provide multiple entry points into the curricula for all learners, including students with disabilities and ELLs, were consistent, and included questioning to individuals and groups. Scaffolds, such as guided note-takers, graphic organizers, and purposeful grouping of students based on strengths and weaknesses to promote student-to-student learning, were evident. In the dual-language classes, students used tablets and graphic organizers to gather information from research.

- The use of task scaffolds to deepen student engagement in challenging work was evident in several classrooms, including a science class where students researched viruses and used microscopes to view characteristics. In an ELA class, students participated in a Socratic seminar where the students in the outer circle used a graphic organizer to observe the inner circle and were given an opportunity to voice questions to members of the inner circle. Students developed their positions on the issue based on their own life experiences.
Additional Finding

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Quality Indicator:</th>
<th>2.2 Assessment</th>
<th>Rating:</th>
<th>Developing</th>
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**Findings**

Teachers do not consistently analyze student progress on common assessments across subject areas. Assessment practices are loosely aligned with the curricula and inconsistent in gauging student understanding across classes through ongoing checks for understanding and self-assessment.

**Impact**

There is limited feedback to students and teachers. Clear, effective adjustments to curricula and instruction across classes inconsistently meet the learning needs of all students.

**Supporting Evidence**

- Across classrooms, some teachers provide ongoing checks for understanding using the school's tiered questioning system, resulting in adjustments to their learning groups. However, there are some missed opportunities for all students to be aware of similar misconceptions that are made in small groups by their peers that may relate to their next learning steps. Students shared that they sometimes receive peer feedback, with the expectation to share one thing their peer did correctly and one thing they needed to improve upon. For example, in an ELA class, peer feedback was grounded in opinion for peers, such as, “You should improve your spelling and punctuation.” After the feedback, students were not held accountable for correcting spelling and punctuation based on peer feedback.

- A review of student feedback reflects a structure to capture students' strengths and areas of growth. Yet, some of the feedback, such as, “You should try to research more topics,” or, “You should try to review your grammar,” did not provide actionable next steps and strategies for student use. Some students were able to interpret their teachers’ feedback and explain the meaning of the comments provided. However, other students were unable to articulate the meaning of the feedback or to share strategies given to improve the quality of their work on the task.

- Across classrooms, teachers use one-to-one conferences to gauge the level of student understanding. However, there is an inconsistent practice of teachers taking the “pulse” of the class to determine the level of all students’ learning needs. In some classrooms, teachers conferred with certain students, yet other students who demonstrated difficulty in their work did not have their needs addressed. Furthermore, in student work products where self-assessments were evident, there were few examples of clear adjustments to address next steps for students to enhance the quality of their work.
**Quality Indicator:** 4.2 Teacher Teams and Leadership Development

**Rating:** Proficient

**Findings**

The majority of teachers are engaged in organized, inquiry-based professional collaborations. Distributed leadership structures are in place.

**Impact**

Professional collaborations promote the achievement of school goals and the implementation of the Common Core Learning Standards, strengthening the instructional capacity of the teachers, who have a voice in key decisions that affect student learning across the school.

**Supporting Evidence**

- Teachers meet regularly in grade level or content teams across the grades to engage in structured, professional inquiry that leads to data-driven instruction. Teachers work to ensure alignment of the curricula to the Common Core, and make adjustments to instruction based on analysis of student performance. For example, the ELA team reviews Degrees of Reading Power (DRP) assessment results, the Common Core standards addressed in the exam questions, and deficiencies in student responses from the *Expeditionary Learning* curriculum.

- Grade-level team leaders and a literacy coach meet regularly to review, plan, and revise literacy unit objectives and activities. These teachers make instructional decisions for the grade, such as extending deadlines for each unit and adding more days on skills students struggled with during last year’s units, such as generating ideas for writing. Teachers spoke about how looking at student work has improved their instructional practice. One teacher stated that the teacher team members have been essential to her work as a new teacher. Another teacher stated, “The impact of teacher team work is really powerful teaching, even as this is my eighth-year teaching.” Another teacher shared, “I am learning this school’s expectations from my colleagues, especially from the ENL teacher. She shares strategies for my ELL students and it positively impacts our teaching and sharing of best practices.” Other teachers concurred that they see their own growth as they too have adopted shared strategies.

- Distributed leadership is evident in multiple ways, including teachers taking roles as facilitators, mentors, and leaders. Teacher leaders were trained as facilitators of meetings for grade teams. After each professional learning opportunity, participants present to their colleagues. Teachers’ voice is respected and they are empowered to make key decisions that affect student learning. It is evident that each teacher team has a teacher serving as the leader who facilitates each grade team meeting. Additionally, these teacher leaders sit on the cabinet, where they meet with the school’s leaders and then present that information to their grade teams.