Quality Review Report

2019-2020

The Anderson School
K-8 03M334
100 West 77 Street
Manhattan
NY 10024

Principal: Jodi Hyde

Dates of Review:
December 10, 2019 - December 11, 2019

Lead Reviewer: Phyllis Siwiec
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

The Anderson School serves students in grade K 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>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>To what extent does the school...</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 State standards and/or content standards</td>
<td>Additional Finding</td>
<td>Well Developed</td>
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<tr>
<td>1.2 Develop teacher pedagogy from a coherent set of beliefs about how students learn best that is informed by State standards and the 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>Area of Celebration</td>
<td>Well Developed</td>
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<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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## School Quality Ratings continued

### School Culture

<table>
<thead>
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<th>To what extent does the school...</th>
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<th>Rating</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1.4 Maintain a culture of mutual trust and positive attitudes that supports the academic and personal growth of students and adults</td>
<td>Area of Focus</td>
<td>Well Developed</td>
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### Systems for Improvement

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<th>To what extent does the school...</th>
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<th>Rating</th>
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<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>Well Developed</td>
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<tr>
<td>1.3 Make strategic organizational decisions to support the schools instructional goals and meet student learning needs, as evidenced by meaningful student work products</td>
<td>Additional Finding</td>
<td>Well Developed</td>
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<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>Well Developed</td>
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<td>4.1 Observe teachers using the Danielson Framework for Teaching along with the analysis of learning outcomes to elevate schoolwide instructional practices and implement strategies that promote professional growth and reflection</td>
<td>Additional Finding</td>
<td>Well Developed</td>
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<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>Well Developed</td>
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<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 State standards</td>
<td>Additional Finding</td>
<td>Well Developed</td>
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Findings

Across the vast majority of classrooms, teaching practices are aligned to the curricula and reflect the belief that students learn best when engaged in active problem-solving as independent, creative, thinkers. The school community further believes that learning takes place in an intellectually stimulating environment that includes high-quality student work products and discussions.

Impact

Shared beliefs among staff about how students learn best lead to student discussions and work products that evidence high levels of thinking and student ownership.

Supporting Evidence

- Teachers facilitated lessons in which students were highly engaged and actively participating in cooperative learning and student-to-student discussions. Lessons embodied the coherent set of beliefs that students learn best in an intellectually stimulating environment. In a grade-eight social studies lesson, students participated in a Socratic seminar with the prompt, “Is total war an acceptable military strategy or a crime against humanity?” Students worked within one of two designated groups, debaters and observers. There were also “wingmen”, who were connected to each debater as a support and sounding board. The focused topic was Sherman’s march to the sea during the Civil War. In other classrooms, small group instruction or cooperative groups provided time for students to express their connections, ask and answer questions, and clarify understandings. A grade-four writing class was organized into various configurations, including three different levels of additional support or enrichment. The teacher first modeled during a mini-lesson, using an article focused on whether or not chocolate milk is beneficial to children. Students then read articles that questioned if animals should be kept in zoos. Students discussed and then wrote varied positions, with evidence based on the differentiated articles.

- Other teaching strategies that illustrated the staff’s set of beliefs were found in station teaching, and in small group instruction utilizing differentiated challenge levels. In an Integrated Co-Teaching (ICT) grade-six math lesson, four stations were used, with one station led by a teacher for those students who were the most challenged. Although this was a grade-six class, the State learning standards were based on grade-eight. The other three stations incorporated tasks that were differentiated into three levels at each station, and were designed for students placed into productive partnerships. In a grade-four writing lesson, four different levels of small groupings used focused articles and topics to construct argumentative debates. Reading, analyzing, and discussing claims with evidence and counterclaims were demonstrated through worktime within each group. Topics ranged from bottled water versus tap water, animals in zoos, orcas in captivity, and protecting sharks from humans.

- Across the vast majority of classrooms, student work products and discussions demonstrated high levels of student thinking during lessons based on State standards that were accelerated at higher grade-level standards and expectations. High levels of participation were observed in classrooms, with students having a choice of topic during personal narrative writing, memoires, and Gothic short stories. Students expressed that learning to master skills and topics is dependent upon each student reflecting on how each learns best. They shared that this can include teacher modeling and feedback, peer evaluations with feedback, and hands-on learning in science labs, with thesis development leading to demonstrable results.
Findings

A theory of action informs culture-building, discipline, and social-emotional support. School leaders and staff strategically align professional development (PD), family outreach and, student learning experiences and support.

Impact

A safe and inclusive environment supports progress toward the school’s goals, along with student voice meaningfully involved in leading school improvement. Students adopt effective academic and personal behaviors, strengthened by the continuing work of the Diversity and Equity committee with the school community.

Supporting Evidence

- The theory of action for improving school culture states the belief that if there is cohesive, whole-school training, then staff will foster consistent behavior-management practices. This includes a common approach to social-emotional learning, so that students will successfully progress through grades, and as they move throughout the day. Using a comprehensive life-skills curriculum at the elementary and middle school levels, students learn three fundamental skills, communication, decision-making, and goal setting, from which all other skills can be built. Students, parents, and staff shared that they feel safe in the school and surrounding school community. School leaders also believe that in order to have an inclusive school culture, student input is necessary. One adopted feature is a Student Council for grades six through eight that enables students to bring issues of interest and concern to school leaders, partner with them to find solutions, lead community meetings, and have the Student Council president sit on the School Leadership Team (SLT).

- An example of student voice involved in decision-making and leading school improvement focused on students’ privilege to leave campus during lunch to eat at neighboring restaurants or public spaces. In June 2019, this policy was reviewed, with students doing research and presenting their position. In addition, the New York City initiative called Vision Zero, which supports safer streets for pedestrians and bike riders, presented information about improved street safety. The policy was reviewed with Student Council members, who secured restaurant partnerships and student identification cards that provide students with access to reduced meal costs and neighborhood benefits. Other initiatives led by students included the creation of the Girls Up club to empower females, the food drives to collect food for struggling families, Trash Troopers who deal with recycling and repurposing, and Town Hall meetings that have focused on gender and sexual identity, among other topics. Student surveys are also administered, so that reflections on class content and procedures are reviewed with students regularly, and adjustments made.

- The school community has multiple initiatives to help strengthen its inclusive culture. The Diversity and Equity committee, comprised of teachers, parents, and school leaders, adopted a program that begins with all students identifying their emotional awareness, and sharing with their classmates and teachers. A workshop for parents to ensure consistency and coherence in the vision for equity was facilitated by committee members. Students developed charters in each classroom, stating shared expectations and responsibilities. This latest diversity and equity initiative involved training for teachers, school leaders, and parents, while students were being introduced to the concepts and practices. The school community is focused on ways to combine this newer program with all of the already enacted policies and procedures. The school community’s focus involves the strategic alignment of PD and family outreach, along with continued student learning experiences and supports that impact their adoption of effective academic and personal behaviors, as in upstander; the focus word for the school year.
Findings
Rigorous habits and higher-order skills are highlighted in curricula and academic tasks and embedded in a coherent way across grades and subjects. Teachers use student work and data to plan and refine curricula and academic tasks.

Impact
All learners must demonstrate their thinking. They access the curricula and tasks and are cognitively engaged.

Supporting Evidence
- The school staff uses several instructional programs that are focused on the needs of students who are gifted and talented. Since the curricula are designed for students in grades kindergarten through grade eight, rigor and higher-order thinking skills are embedded in all content areas across all grades as evidenced in reviewed curricular documents. An example of the rigor is demonstrated in the grade-six math unit that was written for all students, including those who are assigned into a class for gifted and talented students as well as an ICT class that supports students with disabilities who are also gifted and talented. The unit is written with State learning standards at the grade-eight level that provides a two-year acceleration for all grade-six students. The entire kindergarten through grade-eight math program is accelerated, leading to all students taking the Algebra I Regents examination in grade eight. Student thinking is demonstrated in work products and discussions.

- Another example of rigor and embedded coherence throughout the grades is demonstrated in the non-fiction writing curricula. The kindergarten focus on informational writing requires students to teach others about a subject. In grade one, nonfiction writing includes writing reviews in order to convince others. Grades two through five also build on informational writing that is based on accelerated State standards at the next higher level, leading to grade-six informational essay writing based on grade-seven standards and integrated with science to describe four different food chains. Grade-seven curricula continue with informational writing that leads to an eventual grade-eight informational writing project integrated with social studies that is based on the American identity. Lesson plans demonstrate differentiation that is based on student work and data. This ensures that all individuals and groups of students, including multilingual learners (MLLS), students with disabilities, and the lowest and highest achieving students have access to the curricula and tasks so that all are cognitively engaged. An example is found in a grade-five ICT science lesson plan on mixtures and solutions, where several students with Individualized Education Programs (IEPs) of the 29 students in the class have individual goals, adaptive materials, and accommodations before and during the lesson, and afterwards during independent practice. Based on a pre-test, all students were placed in small groups of three to four, with IEP students placed in strategic partnerships throughout the groups to further support their learning.

- All teachers use pre- and post-tests in math and writing, along with student work, to design lesson plans that include small group instruction, and additional support and extensions that are engaging. An example includes a grade-five reading baseline assessment administered at the beginning of the school year based on the summer assigned novel, *Freak the Mighty*. The prompts are “What is a hero?”, and “Can you think of a character that fits this description?” The post-unit assessment has two assignments. One is a group project, outlining the necessary steps one must take to be deemed a hero. The other is based on contrasting and comparing using both the novel’s text and an article from “A Hero’s Journey.” In the vast majority of unit and lesson plans, tasks provide access and cognitive engagement.
Findings

Across the vast majority of classrooms, teachers use assessments, rubrics, and grading policies aligned with the school’s curricula as tools that offer a clear portrait of student mastery. In addition, teachers’ assessment practices consistently reflect the varied use of ongoing checks for understanding and student peer- and self-assessments.

Impact

High quality assessment practices provide actionable and meaningful feedback to students and teachers regarding student achievement. Teachers’ assessment practices lead to effective instructional adjustments during instruction and in modifications to subsequent lessons, meeting all students’ needs.

Supporting Evidence

- Students agreed that the use of assessments and rubrics for assignments provides them with clarity around their attainment of mastery. After receiving rubrics with comments that include teacher-written feedback with next steps, students then conference with teachers on the feedback and how it can impact their work. Students then improve their work by implementing the next steps detailed in the feedback. One example of math feedback to a grade-one student read, “You worked hard to use your neatest handwriting and to organize your thinking on the page by drawing it.” Next steps included, “…make sure to use specific math language to explain your work.” Another example asks the student to make sure to try different strategies as he solves a problem. Additionally, a grade-four teacher gave feedback using a narrative writing rubric that ranged from grades two through five in descriptions of criteria. After highlighting areas that had been met, the next steps included stating that the student should explain animal symbolism at the end with more details. Displayed work in binders included multiple drafts along with the final draft, reflecting students’ application of the teachers’ feedback on earlier drafts of the same work, thus producing a clear portrait of student mastery.

- Across the school, students use a variety of rubrics, including writing rubrics with grade-level ranges of proficiency in various genres. They also use checklists, reading response rubrics, success criteria in “I can” statements and science inquiry, and other tools of peer- and self-assessment. In a grade-eight math group project, a self-evaluation asks each student to reflect on their participation, cooperation, enthusiasm, leadership, and discussion. A student responded, “I worked very well and listened to everyone’s ideas. One thing I could work on is remaining on task, as there was one moment I got a little bit off task.” Self-evaluation is considered by teachers in final grades earned. In addition, a science unit that included a research project used a self- and peer-evaluation, with the categories of focus, contributions, and participation. Students shared that they are aware of the expectation to use all feedback and evaluations as guides for future work, so they are aware of next learning steps.

- Across all classes, the composition of student groups was determined based on assessment data. Students were assigned to differentiated content groups. Teachers periodically adjust these groupings based on formative assessment data, including in-class conferencing. Teachers utilize checks for understanding during instruction to determine next steps, as demonstrated in several classrooms either in the moment or during the next day’s lesson. Multiple teachers utilized different strategies to gauge students’ understanding of the task at hand. While some teachers used exit tickets, one teacher asked for students to place a symbol on the corner of the ticket to designate their level of understanding. Additionally, in most of the observed classrooms, students worked in small groups, with teachers stopping and checking-in with each group, taking notes, and reteaching or refocusing.
Findings
School leaders consistently communicate high expectations to staff and provide training. Additionally, school leaders and staff effectively communicate expectations and partner with families to support students on a path to college and career readiness.

Impact
Teachers benefit from a culture of mutual accountability around high expectations within the structure of initiatives, including intervisitations with other teachers. Effective communication, as well as monthly newsletters, empower families to academically support their children’s progress toward expectations.

Supporting Evidence

- School leaders share high expectations through teacher observation feedback, and an organization handbook that details guidelines for all aspects of instruction, including planners, folder organization, and technology use. For grades five through eight, topics include a homework routine checklist, binder organization, assessments, essays and projects, self-advocacy, and community service. Literacy and math instructional strategies are also articulated in meetings and emails. School leaders plan and deliver individual and whole school PD based on new initiatives, as well as through faculty meetings and through observation feedback to teachers, based on the Danielson Framework for Teaching. Throughout the school year, PD sessions connected to teacher observations cover topics such as best practices in math led by a math staff developer, vertical team curricular alignment in content areas, and restorative circles.

- Teachers hold each other accountable to high instructional expectations through frequent intervisitations. One teacher, after observing an ICT lesson that demonstrated co-teaching in stations, reflected in a template, “I will start incorporating lesson plans that include stations before tests in which the students develop their own study guide and study plan…. this is a great support for all students to strengthen their organizational skills and study habits.” Teachers completed a PD survey, with comments that included “Making sure I share my ideas/thoughts with my partners.”, and “Becoming more self-aware of labeling children.” Teachers agreed that intervisitations add new ways to restructure and improve teaching practices.

- Expectations are effectively communicated with families through weekly and monthly newsletters, the school website, as well as through mobile device apps used for the sharing of assignments, information, photos, and communication. Parents reported that they were especially engaged in using a web-based program that they can access and use to communicate with school staff. They also participate in meetings with the principal while drinking coffee, where each meeting is grade-level specific and therefore very relevant. They appreciate the red communication folder that is used at each grade level that contains pertinent and important information for parents to read and understand. Parents noted the responsiveness of the staff, as teachers will often respond within 12 hours to a parent’s request or concern. Parents felt that they partner with the school through workshops that have been presented in the areas of cyber-bullying and how to be a good digital citizen, Holocaust information, and units of study so that conversations could continue at home, and a grade-five study in law and the legal process that informed all participants.
Additional Finding

### 4.2 Teacher Teams and Leadership Development

**Quality Indicator:**

**Rating:**

**Well Developed**

### Findings

Teacher teams, which include ICT and team-teachers, systematically analyze classroom practice and students they share in order to identify areas of student need and actively address them. Distributed leadership structures are embedded, including teacher leadership on a social-emotional team, and a schoolwide Professional Learning Team (PLT), among others.

### Impact

Collaborations within grade teams and the vertical inquiry team strengthen teachers’ instructional capacity. Across the school, within grade teams and individually, teachers build leadership capacity and have a voice in key decisions around PD and resource acquisitions that affect student learning.

### Supporting Evidence

- During the ICT middle-school math-team meeting, teachers analyzed their student planning templates from a unit involving exponents. Using a protocol, they also analyzed self-assessment notes in order to decide on next steps based on student reflections. Teachers asked about what individual students needed and which students could help others. Teachers concluded with next steps for four students by developing targeted areas for each student, which teacher would be responsible, and when the action plan would take effect. Meeting minutes from a grade-two teacher team listed pedagogical and instructional goals as having students decompose numbers into as many arrays as possible, and to look for as many strategies that students could use to make these arrays. Outcomes were listed as actions for the teacher, for students, and for the teacher-team. There were also measures of success listed for the same three groups that included evidence of reaching the meeting’s goals. In a grade-one teacher team, writing samples within a unit of study were studied, using a norming process as a goal. Next steps included determining strategic small groups for persuasive writing, and revisiting teaching points to create student goals.

- Another way that individual teachers work together is through team-teaching. For example, by reviewing students’ self-reflections on Socratic seminar preparation and collaboration, the teacher-team analyzed the structure of the activities and what accommodations were necessary. For each identified student, the team decided on goals and adaptive materials, along with accommodations and modifications to be used before and during the lesson. The team also identified any additional needed supports so students could succeed with independent practice. Teachers stated that working collaboratively has positively affected them by improving their planning and instruction. Student performance, as seen in State assessment results, shows consistent increases in performance for all subgroups, including students in ICT classes, to be at a 95 to 98 percent proficiency rate.

- Teachers lead committees and initiatives where they play integral roles as decision-makers that affect student learning. All ICT teachers are members of the Special Education Team, led by a teacher-liaison that meets weekly and sets intervisitations within the school and outside with partner schools in order to observe best practices in ICT classrooms. The PLT works collaboratively to develop the professional learning plans and schedule, aligned to teachers’ needs in order to improve student performance. Ninety-two percent of teachers reported in a survey that they are actively trying to improve their teaching. The Diversity and Equity Committee is comprised of teachers, parents, and school leaders who meet to develop knowledge and ability to discuss issues related to equity, with a mission to diversify classroom libraries to include a “windows and mirrors” philosophy. This approach addresses themes that include cultural and historical topics that reflect the diverse student body, while encouraging students to learn about those who are different from themselves.