Quality Review Report

2019-2020

J.H.S. 216 George J. Ryan
Junior High-Intermediate-Middle 26Q216
64-20 175 Street
Queens
NY 11365

Principal: Reginald Landeau

Dates of Review:
December 18, 2019 - December 19, 2019

Lead Reviewer: Adam Breier
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

J.H.S. 216 George J. Ryan 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>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>
</tr>
<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>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>
</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>Area of Focus</td>
<td>Well Developed</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>Area of Celebration</td>
<td>Well Developed</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

### Systems for Improvement

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>To what extent does the school...</th>
<th>Area</th>
<th>Rating</th>
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</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>Additional Finding</td>
<td>Well Developed</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>Well Developed</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<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>
</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>Well Developed</td>
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<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 State standards</td>
<td>Additional Finding</td>
<td>Well Developed</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Findings
School leaders consistently communicate high expectations and provide training to the entire staff. School leaders and staff effectively communicate expectations that are connected to a path to college and career readiness with families.

Impact
A culture of mutual accountability exists around teachers’ support of each other in ensuring that teacher-team meetings and information sharing protocols are effective. Information sharing and successful partnering with families through online platforms and sessions support students in their academic progress toward expectations.

Supporting Evidence
• High expectations are shared with staff through presentations at faculty meetings and through a variety of tools and platforms, including emails, memoranda, weekly professional development (PD) sessions, a faculty handbook, and the weekly Ryan Roar faculty newsletter. Among the high expectations shared in the handbook are instructional design strategies, lesson planning, differentiating instruction to meet all students’ needs, maintaining a positive learning environment, and celebrating students’ achievements by displaying their work. The Ryan Roar newsletter includes a calendar of upcoming events, all PD offerings available for that week, relevant information on initiatives, a description of the monthly social-emotional program schoolwide theme, and a section that celebrates teachers for their successes. Additionally, a writing guide details the schoolwide protocols that all content area teachers are expected to utilize within their lessons, along with student peer-editing and proofreading tools.

• The school community’s culture of mutual accountability is evident in teachers’ reliance on their colleagues to arrive at teacher-team meetings prepared to engage in data analysis, inquiry of student work, and review of the different strategies that teachers use to address students’ various needs. All teacher-team meetings are teacher facilitated and close with all participants agreeing to next-steps for classroom strategy research or implementation, and materials to be prepared for the next meeting. High expectations are also shared with all new teachers through a teacher-designed annual new teacher bootcamp and through a series of new-teacher PD over the course of their first year. Additionally, at the end of every school year, teachers meet with their colleagues, who will be teaching their students the following year, so that they can share information about the students as they transition from one teacher to the next.

• High expectations are shared with families through multiple tools, such as monthly calendars, weekly newsletters, a smartphone application, email, text messages, individual and group phone calls, and the school website. Use of multiple online applications keeps parents abreast of upcoming events, individual class projects, up-to-date student grades aligned with schoolwide grading policies, as well as the assignments their children are expected to complete. Parents praised teachers for their use of online tools to keep them informed, as well as sharing helpful tips on how they can help their children succeed. One parent shared how connecting with a math teacher through this tool made it possible for her child to complete a task with which the student was struggling. Another parent shared a similar situation in which he would not have been able to help his child without the advice received from the teacher through the same online application. Additionally, one parent praised the Words of the Week (WOW) initiative and discussed purposefully using the WOW words throughout the week with all family members.
Findings
The school community’s approach to culture-building, discipline, and social-emotional support is informed by the theory of action that if all community members work with the phrase “all students must learn,” and actively support a schoolwide social-emotional learning strategy, then students’ academic and behavioral outcomes will improve. PD, family outreach, and student learning experiences and supports are strategically aligned.

Impact
Students benefit from a safe environment that is inclusive, respectful, and guided by individualized student voice; however, the full potential of student voice is not fully evolved. The use of mind-body techniques supports students’ adoption of effective academic and personal behaviors.

Supporting Evidence

- Students came to quick consensus that their voice is integral to decisions that impact the school community. One student recalled a survey that asked all students to rate the rigor of materials used during class and the instruction they received. Another student discussed the process used to determine which art class students take. During grade six, all students take visual art, dance, chorus, and band. At the end of that year, all grade six students indicate their art class preferences, which is used to program students’ art class track for grades seven and eight. Additionally, students led the initiative that resulted in forming the school soccer and volleyball teams.

- Students have an active voice and role in leadership of the school’s culture through the Student Organization (SO). Each academy elects two senators to serve on the SO. SO senators decided that a recent fundraiser would benefit an organization that supports autism. They were also integral to decisions about conducting nursing home visits and the themes for school culture-building activities, such as dress-down days. Additionally, SO senators helped organize a recent career day and the school tours offered to incoming students during freshman orientation and are currently creating a student handbook. However, students who do not serve as SO senators were unable to articulate either the decisions being made through the SO or how they could have input into those decisions.

- Students’ academic behaviors are positively influenced through schoolwide implementation of a program that trains teachers how to embed physical and mental brain breaks, mindfulness practices, and social-emotional wellness strategies into classroom procedures. Five teachers are trained in this system, who then facilitate PD for the rest of the staff. Each teacher also receives three sessions with a coach from the organization that designed the mind-body exercises. Parents received training in how to use these techniques during Parent Teacher Association sessions and students benefit from these practices at various times throughout the day. For example, mind-body exercises are facilitated for students each day during morning announcements, weekly during homeroom sessions, and as embedded during classroom instruction. Students praised the school for embedding these strategies throughout the school. One student stated, “When your mind starts to wander from just sitting, it helps you refocus.” Another student shared that starting the day with a mind-body exercise helps “… start the day with something cool because it cools off the mind.” All students agreed to these statements and added that the mind-body exercises always help students stay focused when teachers facilitate them in the middle of double-period classes.
### Additional Finding

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

Across grades and subjects, rigorous habits and higher-order skills are emphasized for all students, including Multilingual Learners (MLLs), and students with disabilities. Curricula and academic tasks are planned and refined using student work and data.

**Impact**

Emphasis on rigorous habits and higher-order skills requires that all students demonstrate their thinking. All students have access to the curricula and are cognitively engaged through differentiated groupings and assignments.

**Supporting Evidence**

- Across lesson plans, there is evidence of rigorous content that is available to students of all groups, including MLLs and students with disabilities. In a grade-seven social studies lesson plan, students are tasked with evaluating the actions taken by Christopher Columbus, critiquing the historical impact of his actions, and articulating this critique through a collaborative, evidence-based mock trial. A grade-six math lesson plan indicates that students are to create a word problem from the unit on rates and ratios, sketch a picture that represents the problem, solve the problem, and support their process by showing all of their work. In a grade-seven English Language Arts (ELA) lesson plan, students are tasked with analyzing multiple works by the same author when comparing and contrasting the life of a blacksmith with that of Paul Revere through the poems “The Village Blacksmith,” and “Paul Revere’s Ride,” by Henry Wadsworth Longfellow.

- A review of curricular documents and academic tasks evidences the planning and modification of instruction to meet all students’ needs. For example, a grade-seven social studies lesson plan includes graphic organizers that were translated into multiple languages and scaffolded to meet students’ needs at three different achievement levels. A grade-six social studies lesson plan for students with Individualized Education Programs (IEPs) and identified students shows that they are to receive small-group instruction. Student groups then travel to stations that are focused on various aspects of Mesopotamia, at which differentiated materials are available, as well as tasks to engage students who complete their work ahead of their classmates. A grade-eight ELA lesson plan shows that students are homogeneously grouped based on their reading levels for the direct instruction portion of the lesson, after which they report to groups based on their writing proficiencies for the writing workshop portion of the lesson. A grade-seven ELA lesson plan shows that students are homogeneously grouped based on writing proficiency and that various graphic organizers are available to assist students in implementing the restate the prompt, answer the question, cite one example of textual evidence, explain how each piece of textual evidence supports your answer, restate the prompt to conclude (RACER) writing protocol.

- A grade-eight math lesson plan shows that students are heterogeneously grouped based on their mastery of prior knowledge and that student group leaders have demonstrated the ability to synthesize lesson content and apply concepts to various problems. A grade-six math lesson plan includes an assignment sheet that has been translated into multiple languages. Another grade-six math lesson plan shows that students are grouped based on performance during the prior day’s lesson and that specific students have been highlighted for small-group instruction. A grade-seven science lesson plan indicates that each station is differentiated based on learning styles and includes translated materials and tablets. A grade-six science lesson plan shows that students are homogeneously grouped based on their results from a prior quiz, and that each of the three stations to which students would report has differentiated materials to meet the needs of students of three different success levels.
Additional Finding

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<tr>
<th>Quality Indicator:</th>
<th>1.2 Pedagogy</th>
<th>Rating:</th>
<th>Well Developed</th>
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**Findings**

Across the vast majority of classrooms, teaching practices are aligned to the curricula and reflect an articulated set of beliefs about how students learn best that is informed by the Danielson Framework for Teaching. Across these same classrooms, student work products and discussions reflect high levels of student thinking, participation, and ownership.

**Impact**

The shared belief among staff that students learn best when they are engaged in lessons that are delivered using the workshop model of instruction is evident in all visited classrooms. Additionally, all learners are engaged in appropriately challenging tasks, demonstrate higher-order thinking skills, and produce meaningful student work products.

**Supporting Evidence**

- Across the vast majority of classrooms, instructional delivery was coherently aligned to the articulated belief that students learn best when they receive direct instruction, teacher modeling, group or individual application, followed by student discussion and whole-class sharing. During a grade-eight ELA lesson, the teacher provided a model essay and discussed her process of constructing the introductory paragraph, highlighting inclusion of the claim, listing evidence, and analyzing the evidence. After a math teacher instructed grade-eight students on how to graph a system of inequalities and modeled that process, students worked in small groups to solve similar equations. A science teacher launched a solar-system scaled model project by guiding students through the equations they would need, along with a model of a completed project, before having students implement those skills within their groups. Additionally, a grade-six social studies teacher modeled how to use the graphic organizer in order to determine how land formations contribute to the development of civilizations.

- Across all grades and subjects, students worked cooperatively and engaged each other in challenging conversations. During a grade-seven social studies class, students were conducting a mock trial to determine whether Christopher Columbus was guilty of theft, enslavement, and murder. In addition to students’ constant conferring with partners about the questions they should ask during the trial itself, all students were engaged in note taking during witnesses’ testimony in preparation for deliberations. During a grade-six math class, students explained their responses to the do now problem and how they used the circle the number, underline the question, box key words, evaluate, and solve (CUBES) strategy. Students moved as groups through various stations, each containing a different experiment, during a grade-seven science lab on asexual reproduction. Grade-seven students worked with partners to write a realistic fictional work using an online platform, so that they could write and edit each other’s contributions in real-time.

- Additionally, across all grades and subjects, students exhibited ownership of their learning. Students in a grade-eight class begin by constructing a to-do list based on the day’s agenda and class goals, and subsequently review the checklist at the end of each lesson. Items not completed are then placed on a list that is carried over into the next day. Students in a grade-seven science class travel together within their group to different stations, at which they complete tasks with the group leader responsible for assessing the group’s success before moving onto the next station. Similarly, each student in a grade-six science lesson created three goals for the in-class project on which they were working. During a grade-six ELA class, each student owned a different aspect of the RACER protocol for a paragraph, then worked as a cooperative team to make sure they all flowed properly when placed together as they each suggested edits to their group members and made adjustments to their own sentences.
Additional Finding

<table>
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<tr>
<th>Quality Indicator:</th>
<th>2.2 Assessment</th>
<th>Rating:</th>
<th>Well Developed</th>
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Findings

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

Impact

High quality assessment practices provide actionable and meaningful feedback to students and teachers regarding student achievement. Teachers’ assessment practices result in effective adjustments during classroom instruction and in modifications to subsequent lessons that meet all students’ needs and enable them to be aware of their next learning steps.

Supporting Evidence

- Across the school, multiple examples of teachers’ feedback to students showed clear portraits of student mastery and feedback to students that they could use for increased achievement. For example, feedback offered to students on ELA assignments reminded them to correct punctuation, spelling, and grammar, support their claims with additional text-based evidence, analyze the evidence that they provide, use rich vocabulary, and to cite authors that they directly quote. Feedback on math assignments reminded students of the value of using multiple methods to find an answer, thoroughly describe the processes taken in solving problems, to double check answers, and ensure that they are correct. Additionally, other examples of feedback from assignments across all content areas drew students’ attention to the importance of ending sentences with a period, making sure that the first word of each sentence begins with a capital letter, using transitional phrases and evidence in discussion conclusions from science laboratory experiments, and re-reading written assignments prior to turning them in to check for grammar and mechanics.

- Students came to a quick consensus when reporting on the value of their teachers’ written feedback and their use of that feedback to improve their learning. One student stated, “My teacher told me to use more complicated words so I use dictionaries. So, I always use a dictionary to find similar words so now, instead of happy, I will use elated, and instead of sad, I will use miserable.” Another student discussed how feedback from a different ELA teacher about tips for writing fiction, such as imagery and personification, have also helped the student improve on writing in social studies because it made word choice a natural step. Another student stated, “In my math class, we usually do peer feedback, but the teacher also gives feedback, pushing me to solve the problem in multiple ways. Now, I always try to do that and also explain how I got to the answer.”

- Across most classrooms, there was evidence that teachers are assessing students’ learning and making adjustments to instruction when necessary. Teachers were regularly checking-in with students in all content area classrooms. Additionally, after noticing a trend by checking students’ understanding, a grade-eight math teacher drew students’ attention so that they should be rationalizing coordinates, not only indicating them. A grade-six math teacher addressed students’ misconceptions regarding unit ratios and simplified fractions by checking their do now responses and retaught the concept. After students were unable to answer a question as to how former slaves fared during Reconstruction, the teacher asked students to turn to their groups and discuss the topic again, adding an additional focus question. The second attempt at eliciting information from students resulted in multiple raised hands. Additionally, similar in-the-moment adjustments were observed in the robotics class and all other observed content areas.
Additional Finding

| Quality Indicator: | 4.2 Teacher Teams and Leadership Development | Rating: | Well Developed |

Findings

All teachers are engaged in teams that consistently analyze student work in cycles of inquiry that reveal targeted areas of student need and actively address them in their work toward fulfilling the school’s goals. Teachers are empowered to positively affect student learning through service as content-team leaders.

Impact

Collaborations within horizontal grade teams and the vertical inquiry team strengthen teachers’ instructional capacity and schoolwide instructional coherence, while data show increases in student achievement. Across the school, within a variety of team structures, teachers build leadership capacity and have a voice in key decisions that affect student learning.

Supporting Evidence

- The grade-seven teacher team met to look at a student’s work samples. Teachers identified the student’s skill strengths as sentence and paragraph structure, grammar and punctuation, including proper evidence citation, and identifying conflict. Teachers also noted the student’s challenges as difficulty with spelling, tense agreement, and identifying and sufficiently analyzing evidence that supports their claim. Teachers then discussed possible supports that could help the student and address similar issues found during analysis of other students’ work. Teachers discussed developing a checklist to accompany students’ use of RACER, promoting students’ use of technology to type and subsequently check grammar, developing and implementing a graphic organizer to assist students in determining the relevance of evidence, and providing a model student product. One teacher also shared that another strategy they should consider implementing across the grade is a recently used pre-writing protocol involving pre-reading, annotating, and planning (RAP). Review of agendas and meeting minutes shows that sixth- and eighth-grade teams conduct similar inquiry-based work.

- In addition to grade-based teams, teachers serve on content-based Instructional Grade Teams (IGTs). A review of agendas and meeting minutes shows that all IGTs have met to review the school community’s instructional goals and ensure that their content area aligns with them, determine which teachers would provide the student work to be analyzed at future meetings, and align the use of technology with content-specific goals. For example, social studies team meeting minutes show that teachers regularly review curricula to ensure that they address literacy skills, focus on academic vocabulary, and consistently embed the same social-emotional learning mind-body techniques across grades. Similar work is conducted across all IGTs.

- Teachers serve as facilitators of all teacher teams and guide their work through collaborative decision-making. Teachers also serve on the Instructional Team, which makes decisions about curriculum and PD improvements. This team convenes twice a year at off-site retreats during which the PD calendar for the year is drafted. The proposed PD calendar is subsequently shared with the entire faculty, which then offers feedback that is used to determine PD topics. Teachers praised school leadership for empowering them to make these decisions both on the Instructional Team level and through whole-faculty feedback. Teachers also spoke about their ability to suggest ideas, and confidence that school leaders would consider and implement them. For example, the social-emotional learning mind-body program in use at the school was initiated by, and is currently led by, five lead teachers. Additional schoolwide initiatives in place that resulted from teacher-voice are the use of an online transcription application, after-school clubs designed to address students’ social-emotional growth, and the design of a grading policy for MLLs that is disaggregated by students’ English proficiency levels.