Quality Review Report

2019-2020

I.S. 034 Tottenville
Junior High-Intermediate-Middle 31R034

528 Academy Avenue
Staten Island
NY 10307

Principal: John Boyle

Dates of Review:
February 5, 2020 - February 6, 2020

Lead Reviewer: Jennifer Eusanio
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

I.S. 034 Tottenville 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

### Instructional Core

<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>1.1 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>Area of Focus</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>Well Developed</td>
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</tbody>
</table>
### 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 Celebration</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>Additional Finding</td>
<td>Well Developed</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

### Systems for Improvement

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>To what extent does the school...</th>
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<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>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>Well Developed</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 State standards</td>
<td>Additional Finding</td>
<td>Proficient</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Findings

Personalized structures, strategic professional development (PD), parent outreach, student learning experiences, and supports are in place and aligned to a vision of empowering all learners.

Impact

Purposeful attendance, guidance, advisory, social-emotional learning supports, team structures, and schoolwide initiatives promote the adoption of effective academic and personal behaviors.

Supporting Evidence

- The school community’s mission draws upon a commitment to challenge all students and provide them with experiences and supports so that they become lifelong learners and leaders in a digital, global community. One level of advocacy that enables these student learning experiences is through the two student impact teams, comprised of one representative per class. The student impact teams provide feedback on different aspects of the school’s academic environment. This year, student feedback led to teachers’ revisions of assessments to embed more sophisticated questions. Students shared that their input impacted teachers use of technology in lessons to engage them and support their organizational needs, leading to stronger work habits. Students are reflecting on the quality of their own feedback and comparing it with feedback from their teachers and peers. Students claimed that their team experience is enhancing their ability to provide feedback to their peers in class.

- Assistant principals, teachers, and guidance counselors have weekly team meetings to monitor students’ progress on increasing positive personal and academic behaviors. The teams regularly communicate with parents, which has promoted increased student engagement and attendance. Attendance is monitored through personalized structures and incentives within the school’s policy. Students stated that they must maintain good attendance to participate in any student-related youth development activities, including Arista honors, and Eagle service-learning societies, the arts, clubs, and all trips. This has resulted in a decrease in the chronic absence rate from 24 percent in 2018 to 20 percent in the beginning of this school year, to 3.1 percent currently. Students reported being known well by several adults, especially their assistant principals, teachers, guidance counselor, or the substance abuse prevention and intervention services (SAPIS) counselor. Students stated that as part of getting to know all of them better, a weekly initiative whereby teachers spend time asking them questions about their personal lives was implemented, and their responses are posted in class as daily reminders for themselves and others. Students all agreed that this initiative is enabling both students and adults to get to know them personally as well as academically, and making the learning environment more inclusive.

- Staff members are trained to support students’ social-emotional learning to provide more meaningful relationships across the school among staff and students. The SAPIS worker and another teacher conduct trainings for students on topics such as mindfulness and respect, which students shared have helped them in class. Strategic programs, such as the student-staffed school store for students with disabilities to learn life and career skills and the implementation of Integrated Co-Teaching (ICT)/honors classes this year, have enabled students to build their self-regulation, organization, and communication skills as they prepared to apply for and perform within these two programs. According to students, other learning experiences such as Science, Technology, Engineering, and Math (STEM), enable them to build confidence and work collaboratively with others. One student stated that she tends to be quiet and if she had not taken part in the STEM program, she does not know how she would have “come out of her shell,” and was glad to have made this choice when deciding on a student-learning experience for this year.
### Findings

Teaching strategies, including talk protocols and other routines, consistently provide multiple entry points into the curricula and are reflected in student discussions and work products.

### Impact

Students are engaged in the curricula. However, the use of strategic, high-quality supports and extensions that lead to higher-order thinking and student ownership are not always present in student work products and discussions in some classes.

### Supporting Evidence

- Across classrooms, students are engaged in small group and partner discussions. In math classes, teachers use discussion sentence starters to promote student questioning and for students to build on each other's ideas during paired or group discussions. To promote equity in student voice within groups, a group facilitator is selected and uses a talk-tally chart to keep track of the number of times each group member participates in discussions and provides feedback for those who remain quiet in the group. Other tools, including checklists, help promote student equity in discussions and provide questions or prompts for students to use for building on each other’s thoughts. During a sixth-grade math class, groups of students explored a real-world problem on party planning for the Super Bowl, where students had to use models and create algebraic equations in order to find a solution for a multi-step word problem. Furthermore, the students had to come to consensus on their plan, what models they would use, how they would represent their equations, solve, and explain their thinking. A facilitator kept the group on task, and ensured that all students in the group participated. However, in an ICT/honors math class, teacher questioning did not provide for enough wait-time for students to process the protocols or math tips they were provided, leading to missed opportunities to strategically engage them in the curricula and deepen the quality of their discussions.

- In an ICT English Language Arts (ELA) class, students analyzed symbols, imagery, figurative language, tone, and theme in poetry. They used a graphic organizer to write text details, and their meanings or effects based on their interpretations of the poem. The teachers posed a question on the purpose of a phrase in the poem, and asked students to pick one out of four possible responses. Although, students shared which of the four responses they chose with their partner, some students did not go deeper to elaborate or explain their reason for choosing their answers. In an ICT social studies class, the teachers’ questioning did not lead students to produce responses that deepened their connections between current and historical events, nor did it engage students in critical thinking in their discussions or work products.

- In one science class, students had multiple roles and worked together in groups to construct a model roller coaster to understand the concepts of potential and kinetic energy. Within each group, students took on a role as a technician, manager, time keeper, or recorder to work collaboratively to design and execute their roller coaster model and test different model variations by height and distance to meet the task's objective. In another science class, although students were engaged in their experiments, there were missed opportunities for strategic extensions for peer questioning and reflection to build upon their conversations. Although students were able to complete the task and demonstrate high levels of thinking, the contributions of all voices within each group were not evident.
**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**

The curricula are strategically aligned to the State standards, with a focus on real-world application in math. School leaders and staff ensure that rigorous habits and higher-order thinking are coherently embedded in the curricula and academic tasks across grades and subjects for all students.

**Impact**

The curricula promote rigor and emphasize the demonstration of student thinking, which fosters college and career readiness across grades and subject areas.

**Supporting Evidence**

- Across math units and lesson plans, there is a strategic emphasis on real-world and multi-step problem-solving, with a focus on developing and exploring math practices on planning and perseverance. In a seventh-grade lesson plan, the task requires students to develop a budget for their group to spend twenty dollars each on a meal, including a beverage and tip. Students cannot go over their budget, and may have a choice of items to pick from a real-life diner menu. Similarly, a sixth-grade math lesson plan contains a real-world task on party planning for a birthday that requires students to write algebraic equations, solve the problem, and write explanations to determine the number of items purchased given a set of rational numbers and variables. In an eighth-grade Algebra I plan, students are required to create a linear system of equations that models a real-world scenario representing the number of wheels for a total given number of tricycles and bicycles in a store. They must then graph the system, determine whether ten more tricycles could be ordered, and explain their rationale. Overall, the emphasis on real-world problem solving in the curricula promotes college and career readiness for all students.

- In ELA, a strategic focus on infusing the use of relevant text evidence is found across the curriculum. In an eighth-grade unit plan, students are required to create a literary analysis essay based on a short story and determine how a complex character advances the plot or helps to develop the theme of a text. In the essay, students will analyze how characters’ interactions can change over the course of the text and use specific details to support their answer. A seventh-grade unit contains a task where, based on a short story, students will determine how story elements impact characters and theme. Students will be asked to consider character conflict, how they resolve their conflict, and what their thoughts, feelings, dialogue, and actions reveal about this character using details from the story in their response. In a sixth-grade lesson plan, students are asked to use details from a poem to support their rationale for choosing why the speaker in a poem is shaped by the frightening things she faces. Similar connections are made in social studies, where students are expected to use text evidence from primary and secondary sources to support their claims, thus promoting cross-curricular connections on specific standards across grades.

- Across unit plans, access to rigorous tasks are planned for students with disabilities, students who struggle, and those who are accelerating. In a science unit, diverse groups of students are expected to construct an explanation using evidence on how the body is composed of interacting systems, develop, and use a model to describe the function of a cell, and then plan and conduct an investigation. In an eighth-grade performance task, students are required to use multiple sources, including multi-media, to determine whether capitalism is the best economic system for the United States and its citizens and provide a rationale for their reasons. Overall, planned tasks embed rigorous thinking to enable students to demonstrate their thinking.
Findings

Across the vast majority of classrooms, teachers use or create curricula-aligned common assessments, rubrics, and grading policies that create a clear picture of student progress. Teachers track progress toward focus standards to adjust curricular and instructional decisions.

Impact

Actionable and meaningful feedback from and decision making by teachers enable all students, especially specific subgroups, to demonstrate increased mastery.

Supporting Evidence

- School leaders and teachers review common assessment data to determine areas of improvement on performance skills and focus standards based on historical trends. In ELA, these trends revealed that certain skills and focus standards, such as making inferences, were challenging for students across grades. This was especially noted when students analyzed the development and interactions between characters and the analysis of structure. Adjustments were made to infuse more sophisticated test questions within performance tasks in ELA and social studies. Teachers also planned tiered supports for mixed-ability levels and particular subgroups, and implemented note-taking, close reading, and annotating strategies. ELA common assessments revealed that students with disabilities were demonstrating mastery levels in these standards. For example, seventh-grade student performance data on successive assessments reflect increases from 48 percent proficiency to 68 percent proficiency by mid-year on the analysis in structure of a text, part to whole, thus demonstrating increased mastery toward meeting this focus standard.

- Similarly, in math, reviews were conducted using historical and current data from State and common assessments. Data revealed that focus standards and skills such as ratio reasoning, rewriting an expression in different forms, and rotations and reflections on two-directional figures using coordinates are areas where students were challenged. As such, this year, school leaders started using a new online diagnostic assessment program that determines individual students' needs. The program includes online targeted intervention that serves individual student's needs during the semester based on their performance. Additionally, teachers reported using the tracking reports to conduct small-group instruction for reteaching skills, providing scaffolds, and creating graphic organizers and other tools or supports to intentionally adjust and support student mastery. Based on the beginning of the year diagnostic, all students have shown growth, especially students in self-contained special education classes, who have demonstrated 76 percentage points of growth in number sense.

- A uniform grading policy is used across subject areas and grades. Curriculum-aligned rubrics are used, where the design aligns with the expectations of the State exams. Teacher feedback on student work reflects strengths, areas for improvement, and examples, questions, or references to strategies or charts that students may use or refer to when in need of support. Students refer to their next steps from teacher feedback to formulate their goals, and they partner with their teacher to improve their work products across subject areas. Students agreed that their work products are improved as a result of their teachers and, at times, their peers’ feedback, which support the academic improvement of their work products.
Findings

School leaders consistently communicate high expectations that are connected to students becoming empowered learners. Staff members effectively communicate expectations connected to a path to college and career readiness and successfully partner with families.

Impact

Training and schoolwide structures lead to a culture of mutual accountability for the school’s instructional expectations. Home-school partnerships support student progress toward next-level readiness.

Supporting Evidence

- Instructional expectations are communicated through the staff handbook, emails, and PD. In the staff handbook, the memoranda entail expectations for maintaining a classroom conducive to student learning, the staff-developed lesson-plan template for all subjects, guidelines for providing students with feedback, and the grading policies for citizenship and academics. PD is provided by both school leaders and teachers to support the instructional focus on ensuring that all students become empowered learners when offered distinct pathways in an inclusive classroom culture where they work toward becoming independent thinkers, peer collaborators, and motivated students. To support this vision, PD sessions on differentiation of instruction, effective use of technology in the classroom, and the new online diagnostic assessment and intervention program have been provided to staff members. Follow-up emails are sent to teachers by their fellow team members after PD sessions to provide guidance on next steps. Supports include strategies, documents, websites, or professional books that are shared at meetings and agreed upon by the team to support their work in a particular unit. Teachers are implementing several of these strategies across classes, such as the use of student-talk tally charts and discussion-builder sentence stems in math. Additionally, teachers are using the staff-developed lesson-plan template to design their lessons.

- A commitment by teachers is present, where collegial support and accountability are provided through team conversations. On the special education team, six teachers have been trained to evaluate and provide feedback on students’ Individualized Education Programs (IEPs) to ensure that all of their needs are met, and that the IEPs are well written. School leaders provide feedback to teachers during post-observation debriefs, where they discuss strategies on how teachers can meet the schools’ expectations for student success. Teachers noted that school leaders provide supportive PD and professional resources to help them meet their students’ needs. A review of teacher feedback and class observation reports demonstrates an ongoing commitment by teachers to ensure that they are meeting the school’s instructional goals.

- Parents collectively agreed that the school leaders and staff effectively communicate with them using a variety of structures, including social media accounts, the online-grading program, school-messaging accounts, and emails. In addition, the What’s Happening newsletter enables parents to view the most up-to-date information on school events and current units of study in different subject areas in order to support their children at home. Parents shared that the new online diagnostic assessment and intervention program purchased this year has enabled them to have quick access to their children’s ongoing progress in ELA and math. Additionally, the school’s website contains a multitude of resources, such as extra worksheets, tools, links to other websites, and videos, especially in math, to support parents with homework whenever their children are having difficulty at home. All parents agreed that this home-school connection has enabled their children to demonstrate progress and much success, and is preparing them for next-level readiness.
Findings

Teacher teams systematically analyze key elements of their work, including classroom practices, assessment data, and the work of students on whom they are focused. Distributed leadership structures are embedded in the school.

Impact

Effective teacher leadership empowers teachers to have an integral role in making key decisions that result in shared improvements in teacher practice and mastery of goals for groups of students throughout the school.

Supporting Evidence

- Grade-level and subject-based teacher teams meet weekly to analyze the work products and performance data of groups of five students per class, termed push students, to determine their progress toward team-established goals. Push students are those who have scored high Level 2 or low Level 3 on State ELA and math exams. The teams identify one or two focus goals, determine strategies to remediate the challenges and gaps in their students’ understanding, and monitor progress. Shared improvements in math teacher practices are reflected in the use of real-world applications to engage students in multi-step problems, and increased opportunities for student discussions. ELA team minutes reflect discussions emphasizing the citing of text evidence as a focus standard. A review of push student data indicated that the majority of student groups had demonstrated mastery of their target goals. For example, cycle one data in ELA showed that the majority of push students in three out of four classes demonstrated mastery in meeting their focus goal of citing text evidence and making inferences. To achieve this, teachers used several strategies, including video clips, having students reflect on the relevance of the information before choosing to use it, and the use of a sign-post strategy, which is a close reading strategy for students to find clues to determine how characters change and to help them understand the book’s theme.

- In a sixth-grade math team meeting, the teachers reviewed their push students’ recent assessment results and determined what their glows (areas of strength), and grows (areas of improvement) were to determine focus goals. Students performed well on the skills of comparing like items and translations. As they reviewed their glows, they determined what worked well and found that the use of real-life situations, knowledge of multiplication facts, the use of distributive and commutative properties, and of different models supported students’ success. Students were challenged with using variables to solve real-world problems, acquiring, and applying properties. The teachers reviewed the students’ work to determine what their misconceptions were and noted that students were over-reliant on annotating key terms. Teachers determined a need to reinforce the five-part problem solving strategy used at the beginning of the year, and strongly emphasized the first two parts of that strategy to help students to reason through word problems. They concluded that this instructional adjustment would aid students more than the strategy of using key terms. Teachers decided to share responsibilities and incorporate that strategy in subsequent units, where it could be reinforced in future tasks.

- Effective teacher leadership is an ongoing process throughout the school. Teachers have a pivotal role in making modifications to the curricula, assessments, and instructional strategies that lead to changes in efforts to increase student learning. In math, teacher leadership training has contributed toward improvements in the math curricula, where tasks have been adjusted to support students with disabilities in the honors programs. Teachers reported using those tasks to enrich students in non-honors classes, which has increased their level of engagement.