Quality Review Report

2019-2020

North Bronx School of Empowerment
Junior High-Intermediate-Middle 11X287

3710 Barnes Avenue
Bronx
NY 10467

Principal: Magdalen Neyra

Dates of Review:
January 16, 2020 - January 17, 2020

Lead Reviewer: Lenneen Gibson
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

North Bronx School of Empowerment 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>
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<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>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 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>Developing</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>Proficient</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
### School Culture

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

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Area</th>
<th>Rating</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1.4</td>
<td>Maintain a culture of mutual trust and positive attitudes that supports the academic and personal growth of students and adults</td>
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<tr>
<td>3.4</td>
<td>Establish a culture for learning that communicates high expectations to staff, students, and families, and provide supports to achieve those expectations</td>
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### Systems for Improvement

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

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Area</th>
<th>Rating</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1.3</td>
<td>Make strategic organizational decisions to support the school's instructional goals and meet student learning needs, as evidenced by meaningful student work products</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3.1</td>
<td>Establish a coherent vision of school improvement that is reflected in a short list of focused, data-based goals that are tracked for progress and are understood and supported by the entire school community</td>
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<tr>
<td>4.1</td>
<td>Observe teachers using the Danielson Framework for Teaching along with the analysis of learning outcomes to elevate schoolwide instructional practices and implement strategies that promote professional growth and reflection</td>
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<tr>
<td>4.2</td>
<td>Engage in structured professional collaborations on teams using an inquiry approach that promotes shared leadership and focuses on improved student learning</td>
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<tr>
<td>5.1</td>
<td>Evaluate the quality of school-level decisions, making adjustments as needed to increase the coherence of policies and practices across the school, with particular attention to State standards</td>
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**Area of Celebration**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Quality Indicator:</th>
<th>4.1 Teacher Support and Supervision</th>
<th>Rating:</th>
<th>Proficient</th>
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**Findings**

Teachers receive regular feedback on their teaching practices through the Every Grade Every Day initiative, in addition to classroom observations. School leaders use data from instructional walkthroughs to plan professional learning sessions.

**Impact**

Teachers receive feedback from administrators that is aligned to the school's instructional focus, promoting professional growth and development.

**Supporting Evidence**

- The Every Grade Every Day initiative is a structure that allows the administrative team to engage in informal classroom visits with a specific focus. Administrators provide the entire staff feedback in the form of glows, grows, and next steps based on focus-aligned data collected during classroom visits. A recent round of observations with a focus on timing and pacing commended the staff that students were engaged in leveled activities and class agendas articulating the flow of the day were visible. The glow cited some classes needed to adhere to time constraints in their lessons by using a timer. In addition, the feedback noted the need for differentiated tasks and scaffolds to support student engagement while providing students opportunities to engage in discourse. The focus for the next round of visits still included pacing, timing, and supports for students to have access to assigned tasks. At the time of this visit, classrooms visited demonstrated deliberate use of timing devices allot specific time for portions of the lesson.

- Written feedback to teachers incorporates strengths, with specific suggestions that align to the school's instructional focus of student-led discussions as well as the Danielson Framework for Teaching. A review of an observation report revealed feedback that commended a teacher for enabling students to engage in student-to-student discourse that allowed students to surface inaccuracies in their answers, thus allowing for self-correction. The recommendation was to adjust the pacing of the lesson for students to experience productive struggle to reach a consensus during discussions. Another teacher was commended for providing actionable feedback to students for successfully completing a task while progress monitoring was occurring. The next steps tasked the teacher to pose higher-order thinking questions to stimulate student discourse while pushing their thinking. Additionally, modeling of annotating and talking to the text was included in the feedback to support student discussions. The 2018-19 Measures of Teacher Practice (MOTP) indicated that 100 percent of the teachers were rated effective. A pedagogue new to the profession mentioned that in addition to an assigned mentor, school leaders visit their classroom regularly and provide immediate feedback in the form of glows and grows.

- Data collected from Community-Based Organizations (CBOs) on student engagement in the classroom, Every Grade Every Day observations, and data analysis from the Instructional Leadership Team (ILT) were used to support professional learning and lesson planning clinics. Lesson planning clinics occur three times a week and teachers from different grades attend sessions on embedding plans for timing, pacing, articulating differentiation in tasks through the use of scaffolding and student discourse in lesson plans. Similarly, a series of professional learning sessions on the hallmarks of advanced literacy, specifically on building discussion and vocabulary building in curricular documents, were noted in the professional learning plan. Additionally, based on observations and a review of the Online Occurrence Reporting System (OORS), a series of professional learning sessions on classroom management supported teachers in strategies of setting clear expectations for the classroom environment, thus promoting professional growth and reflection for teachers.
Findings

The inclusion of scaffolds into teaching practices are beginning to provide students with access to learning tasks; however, the scaffolds are not yet consistently differentiated to meet the needs of diverse learners. Student discussions are included in teaching practices.

Impact

Missed opportunities in differentiating scaffolds for students result in uneven student engagement. There is limited participation in some student-to-student discourse.

Supporting Evidence

- In a sixth-grade Integrated Co-teaching (ICT) math class, students used tables and graphs to determine whether two expressions were equivalent. Students engaged in differentiated tasks such as online math program, while some students worked individually on a worksheet using the order of operations scaffold, and a small group worked with a teacher using manipulatives and anchor charts to evaluate expressions. All students had access to the task. However, in a self-contained 12:1:1 eighth-grade math class, students were tasked with drawing the equation of a line of best fit and using it to make predictions. The teacher modeled for the students how to show a best fit line using a ruler. Students either completed a worksheet on a comparing a best fit line on a graph or were provided a textbook assignment. Although toolkits such as rulers, calculators, and the investigate scaffold were available, there were missed opportunities for differentiated scaffolds or scaffolded questions for students with disabilities to successfully engage in the task.

- In a social studies class, the focus of the lesson was, "What were the characteristics of a religion/belief system?" Students were given a scaffold that provided students an overview of the world religions as well as the percentages of the global population that adhere to their tenets. All students completed the same graphic organizer to compare and contrast the religions based on the founder, major beliefs and sacred texts found in the scaffold. A sixth-grade English Language Arts (ELA) class required writers to stay organized while writing persuasive speeches. All students with the exception of one whose scaffold differed to support language acquisition, received the same graphic organizer that scaffolded the paragraphs for the persuasive speeches. Thus, there are missed opportunities to provide multiple entry points so that a diversity of students can successfully complete the task.

- Student-to-student discourse was uneven, thus impacting participation and thinking in lessons. In a sixth-grade ELA class, the learning target tasked students with evaluating the strength of an argument by determining how a claim is supported by reasoning and evidence. Students participated in a Socratic seminar that addressed whether school districts should ban contact sports due to the incidences of traumatic brain injuries. The teacher asked the students to engage in a call to action and a student stated, “How would you feel if you loved football and were told to stop?” Another stated, “I choose my life over football.” Students also cited evidence from the text Last Gridiron. However, the same students monopolized the conversation, limiting participation. Conversely, in a seventh-grade self-contained math class, students were tasked with creating a model and writing an equation to represent a model. The teacher attempted to use multiple pathways for students to respond to questions such as “How many ways can we represent the problem?” Students were heard using accountable talk stems such as “I agree” and “I disagree,” but students were engaging in limited content discussion with one another. Visits to reading intervention classes revealed students engaging in turn and talks to identify supporting details in a story by citing evidence from their text; however, this practice was not consistently observed across classroom, thus demonstrating uneven levels of student engagement and thinking.
**Additional Finding**

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

Curricular documents showed alignment to State standards and a focus on rigorous skills, such as on citing textual evidence and identifying the central ideas in a text and application of mathematical properties.

**Impact**

Coherent curricula across content areas emphasize rigorous habits and promote next-level readiness for all students.

**Supporting Evidence**

- Lesson plans and unit plans showed common elements such as essential questions, learning targets and teaching points, vocabulary, the components of the workshop model for teaching, incorporating student discussions, and formative assessment plans. All lesson plans across content showed alignment to the State or content-based standards including a focus on hallmark two of Advanced Literary, which entails rich discussion. The standards addressed in the lesson plans focused on citing textual evidence to support what the text says as well as drawing inferences from the text. Additional standards of focus cited in lesson plans were determining the central ideas from a source and engaging collaboratively in range of discussions with partners. This is in tandem with the school’s instructional focus of enabling students to engage in student-to-student discourse during instruction, thus building coherence in curricular documents and promoting college and career readiness for students.

- A sixth-grade social studies unit plan on the Reconstruction era revealed students analyzing primary sources to discern if the policies of the Reconstruction era benefitted African Americans. Students were tasked with making text-to-self connections about the rights of African Americans during the Reconstruction era, followed by a case analysis of the *Plessy vs. Ferguson* case. The unit culminated with a Socratic seminar comparing the Reconstruction era to modern day policies. A seventh-grade ELA unit entitled “The Power to Persuade” lead students through a series of lessons on ways to evaluate an argument. Students started with identifying elements of an argument through editorials, blog sites, and social media posts. Graphic organizers such as “Elements of an Argumentative Text” and an anchor chart with the same name were used for students to have access to the texts. Additionally, sentence frames geared toward argumentation such as “The argument is whether or not…” and “The reasoning in the argument was sound/unsound because…” Students determined the credibility of sources through research with a culminating activity of evaluating and comparing argumentative texts such as a parent letter to a newspaper editor and a social media blog post on student cellphone usage. As a result, diverse learners across content areas have access to rigorous tasks.

- A sixth-grade reading intervention lesson plan tasked students with providing a summary of the text *Happy to Be Herself* using the 5W’s (who, what, where, when, and why). Lesson plans showed leveling of texts and two versions of a scaffold to support summarizing using the 5W’s. One scaffold included additional supports in the form of statements to address the 5W’s, while the other scaffold enabled students to draw what they saw as a summary. A sixth-grade ICT math lesson plan tasked students with using graphs and tables to determine if two expressions are equivalent. Anchor charts articulating the commutative and associative properties were available for students. Students were tasked with determining if two expressions were equivalent by using substitution to complete a table and plotting their answers on a coordinate plane. Diverse students received scaffolds such as algebraic statement cards to support their reasoning for mathematical properties, thus ensuring tasks are accessible for learners.
Additional Finding

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<th>Quality Indicator:</th>
<th>2.2 Assessment</th>
<th>Rating:</th>
<th>Proficient</th>
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Findings

Teachers use task-specific rubrics to assess student work. Common assessments such as the Degrees of Reading Power (DRP) and online math platforms are used to determine student progress.

Impact

Common assessments and actionable feedback on student work data are used to inform small group instruction and the overall grouping of students.

Supporting Evidence

- Teachers use common assessments such as DRP are administered three times a year to determine students’ reading comprehension level and to determine if further reading intervention is required. The fall and winter administration revealed that students in grade-six that are approaching grade level attained minimum scores of 54 and maximum scores of 64 percentage points. The winter administration showed a three-percentage point increase for minimum and maximum scores for the same grade. Students in the same grade reading at grade level revealed minimum scores of 64 percentage points and 74 percentage points. The winter administration showed students increased by three and four percentage points for minimum and maximum scores. This trend of increases in minimum and maximum scores between fall and winter administration were seen across the grades. This data is used to determine what students may be in need of additional reading intervention in the areas of comprehension and fluency. This data is also used by teachers to inform small group instruction, student placement in guided reading groups, as well as the overall grouping of their students.

- An online math program in conjunction with unit assessments is used to adjust curricula and instruction. Data is collected every three weeks to determine if students are on track based on their identified area(s) of need. Teachers also use this data to provide small group instruction or individualized instruction based student performance. A review of data from the online platform revealed that the entire school is 65 percent on track in their progress. There are ELA trackers that are used to track student achievement on performance tasks. Teachers analyze the data and include notes on additional supports for students such as grammar, organization, or character development. Additionally, skill sets that teacher noted as areas of student difficulty were citing evidence and claims in their writing and logical reasoning. Teachers conducted strategy lessons to support the skill sets identified in the areas of student struggle.

- Samples of student work reviewed were assessed with task-specific rubrics that included actionable feedback to students in the form of glows, grows, and in some cases, student reflections. A seventh-grade math task on composite figures was assessed with a three-point rubric. The feedback relayed lauded the student for including the strategy used and the accuracy of calculations. The next steps were procedural such making sure of correct placement of decimal points thus ensuring accuracy in place values. An eighth-grade ELA persuasive writing assessment tasked students with writing an essay on choice of topics such as the banning of cellphones, whether physical education should be mandatory, or student perceptions of homework assignments. Student work was assessed with a four-point persuasive writing rubric that ranged from emerging to exceeding the goal. The feedback commended a student for developing a clear introduction with use of transition words. The next steps cited the restating of the claim and further supporting the writer’s argument. A sixth-grade math task on the division of fractions was assessed with a focus on the standards that addresses multiplying and dividing by fractions. The student reflection included being neat in their work when presenting their work, thus making the feedback actionable.
Additional Finding

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<th>Quality Indicator:</th>
<th>3.4 High Expectations</th>
<th>Rating:</th>
<th>Proficient</th>
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Findings

High expectations are communicated to the staff via bi-monthly memos, the staff handbook, and professional learning sessions. There is a culture of staff members articulating high expectations to students and families in regards to learning.

Impact

Teachers are held accountable for expectations on instruction and professional learning via classroom observations and instructional walkthroughs. Students participate in learning opportunities that prepare them for their next educational steps.

Supporting Evidence

- High expectations for instruction are communicated via the staff handbook that articulates expectations such as suggested unit and lesson plans templates for respective content areas that are available through the school’s shared electronic platform. Similarly, teachers are expected to maintain a weekly calendar of lessons inclusive of modifications and annotations of their lessons to reflect planning. A bi-weekly memo is distributed schoolwide that communicates a literacy spotlight that highlights culturally relevant literature and authors for classes to explore. Mentions of teacher support via grade teams and content-specific coaches were mentioned in the memos. Content-specific instructional look-for documents delineate the expectations for students and teachers during math classes such as students assisting peers in explaining mathematical concepts while supporting struggling students in remediation or facilitating student learning. Similarly, the math classes mirrored similar expectations such as students communicating mathematical ideas and teachers encouraging student-to-student discourse, which is aligned to the school’s instructional focus of student discussions. Teachers are held accountable for these expectations via the classroom observation process.

- High expectations for professionalism are communicated through Peer Collaborative Teachers (PCT) and administrative members of the professional development team, which are tasked with facilitating professional development for the school. A review of the professional learning plan revealed a series of sessions on incorporating hallmarks one and two of Advanced Literacy to support student discussions and the infusion of rich texts and culturally relevant texts into the curriculum. Additionally, data from classroom walkthroughs revealed the need to collect data on student engagement during instruction to drive instruction. Moreover, lesson planning clinic sessions were included in the professional learning plans to support teachers in planning engaging lessons for students. Additionally, these walkthroughs surfaced a need for teachers to be more accountable for the culture of their classroom environments and getting to know their students well. Sessions on getting to know their students well and the school’s culture and priorities are beginning to address these issues by structuring arrivals, dismissals, and transitions between classes. Teachers are held accountable for these expectations vis-à-vis instructional walkthroughs.

- High expectations are articulated by the guidance counselors as they work with eighth-grade students and their families through the high school articulation process. Students had an opportunity to visit a neighboring high school to gain exposure to a high school. Partnerships with community-based organizations provide mentoring experiences for students cultivating attributes such as leadership. In addition, students in eighth-grade have an opportunity to take high school courses such as Living Environment and Algebra 1. Results on the 2018-19 Living Environment exam showed a 73 percent passing rate and a 70 percent passing rate for Algebra. Moreover, the 2018-19 School Quality Snapshot showed an 82 percent on the Next Level Readiness metric.
**Additional Finding**

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

Content and grade-level teacher teams engage in regular cycles of inquiry that analyze student work using the ATLAS protocol. Distributed leadership practices are in place, such as teachers serving on the Instructional Leadership Team and the professional learning team.

**Impact**

Teacher teamwork has resulted in the implementation of content-specific standards. Teachers have a voice in decision-making in the school.

**Supporting Evidence**

- Teachers collaborate in grade and content teams during eight-week inquiry cycles analyzing student work using the ATLAS protocol. A review of ELA teacher team notes revealed that the team analyzed the 2018-19 ELA State exam data and gleaned that students in grade-seven struggled to demonstrate proficiency in analyzing how elements of a story interact in shaping the plot and characters. The standard of focus for the inquiry cycle was supporting students in analyzing how lines of dialogue or incidents in a story propel action and reveal aspects of a character. The eighth-grade teachers consulted research on close reading exercises that honed in on character development and created a focus group based on a pre-test data. Two eighth-grade classes scored 57 percent and 52 percent on the pre-test. Teachers collaborated on a lesson that focused on character development, taught the lesson, and reconvened to shared successes such as images for dialogue and turn-and-talks. They also identified next steps for reteach and revisions such as to model for students the selection of evidence and how to focus on specific dialogue. As a result of these practices, post-test data showed 14 percent growth and 16 percent growth for the groups respectively. Teachers engage in professional collaborations that promote the implementation of State standards.

- An eighth-grade math teacher team engaged in inquiry work on past State math data and noticed that students showed signs of struggle with word problems on scientific notation. Students were unclear of what the question was asking as well as which math operation to use to solve the problems.Baseline results on scientific notation showed five eighth-grade classes scoring below 70 percent. Teachers conducted an item analysis and noted students' misconceptions around rules for multiplying and dividing positive and negative integers as well as understandings around adding two positive integers. Teachers identified strategies to support misconceptions such as identifying the math operation in the problem and multiplying and dividing using scientific notation. Strategies for students with disabilities and Multilingual Learners (MLLs) were identified. Teachers employed a four-step problem solving strategy, visuals for MLLs, and tangible number lines for students with disabilities. As a result of the inquiry process, post-test data showed slight gains, with some students scoring eleven and ten percentage points higher on subsequent assessment; thus, supporting the implementation of State standards.

- Distributed leadership structures are in place such as the Peer Collaborative Teacher (PCT), teachers serving on the Instructional Leadership Team (ILT), the Positive Behavioral Interventions and Supports Team (PBIS), and the professional learning team. Teachers accompany school leaders on learning walks, collect data, and engage in inquiry cycles to discuss the data. As a result of these instructional walks, lesson planning clinics were implemented by teachers and a series of professional learning sessions facilitated by teachers on classroom environment was offered. Additionally, the ladder of support was created and structures such as monthly PBIS town halls to reinforce Prepared, Organized, Willing Empowered, and Respectful (POWER) are beginning to take hold in the school.