Quality Review Report

2019-2020

P.S. 315 Lab School

K-8 10X315

2865 Claflin Avenue
Bronx
NY 10468

Principal: Gaby Flores

Dates of Review:
November 6, 2019 - November 7, 2019

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

P.S. 315 Lab 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><strong>To what extent does the school...</strong></td>
<td></td>
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</tr>
<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>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>Proficient</td>
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</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 Maintain a culture of mutual trust and positive attitudes that supports the academic and personal growth of students and adults</td>
<td>Additional Finding</td>
</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>
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</table>

## Systems for Improvement

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

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<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>
</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>
</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>Area of Celebration</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>
</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>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Area of Celebration

| Quality Indicator: | 4.1 Teacher Support and Supervision | Rating: | Well Developed |

Findings

The strategic use of frequent cycles of classroom observations, intentional, transparent planning, and management of professional development (PD) support teachers’ practice. School leaders and teacher peers provide effective feedback that builds leadership capacity and informs succession plans.

Impact

Purposeful PD and teacher support structures enhance schoolwide curricular and instructional practices, teacher professional growth and reflection, and promote the improvement of student work products.

Supporting Evidence

- School leaders conduct ongoing, purposeful reviews of teacher observation and student assessment data with their teachers via conferences to discuss areas of strengths and needs. In efforts to increase their school’s expectations on designing coherent instruction, and enhancing student engagement, school leaders revised their PD plan with teacher input based on these data sets to support these areas. PD has included working with consultants on revising English Language Arts (ELA) units to focus on State standard two, determine central ideas or themes of a text. A review of ELA units reflected an emphasis on this particular standard. One teacher noted that she is beginning to reflect on how she can incorporate this standard when teaching math and science, as students need to understand the central idea of real-world problems in order to solve them. A review of teacher data demonstrated increases in their professional growth and reflection of practices. Students’ summaries demonstrated increased depth in relevant details and ideas, showing progress toward meeting established unit goals.

- Informed succession plans are intentionally created to support teachers, based on multiple sources of data. Teachers are chosen to participate in programs and initiatives within the district, and at the Department of Education, to build their leadership skills. They return to the school and, as part of the schoolwide expectation, engage their colleagues in one-to-one professional learning on specific areas based on the school’s instructional expectations. After participating and leading PD sessions on Culturally Responsive Sustaining Education practices, two teachers revised their curricula and are incorporating new author studies, using the works of Mo Williams and Eve Bunting, to enable their students to make better connections to the text and increase student engagement. Both teachers reflected and felt that these authors share real-world issues and yet they can still connect character themes they are currently working on, such as friendship and kindness, into their instruction, thus promoting schoolwide expectations on State standard two.

- Purposeful and frequent cycles of observations by school leaders, teacher intervisitations, and learning walks occur throughout the year, where feedback is provided based on the analysis of student classroom activities, data, and the resulting student work products. Teachers reported that the ongoing, timely feedback supports their growth, with specific next steps and strategies that are enhancing their instructional practices. A review of observation feedback reports and other forms of support reflected actionable and prioritized comments by school leaders, aligned to the Danielson Framework for Teaching. To support student engagement toward highly effective practices, a school leader advised a teacher to designate roles for student groups so that each student could carry out their own responsibilities and use accountable talk stems to engage with one another in deeper discussions. As noted in the subsequent observation, the teacher implemented the strategy, which demonstrates her commitment and reflection toward her professional growth.
Findings

Across classrooms, teaching practices are aligned to the school’s curricula. However, currently, student work products do not always reflect a coherent set of beliefs about how students learn best, as informed by the Danielson Framework for Teaching on student engagement, student-to-student discussion, and State standards.

Impact

Although student discussions reflect high levels of participation and thinking, student work products are in the process of reflecting high-level thinking and ownership across classes.

Supporting Evidence

- The school community’s instructional belief states that students learn best through active involvement, social participation, meaningful activities, relating new information to prior knowledge, engaging in self-regulation, being reflective, aiming toward understanding rather than memorization, and developing background knowledge. These beliefs connect with the Danielson Framework for Teaching component on student engagement. In a sixth-grade ELA class, students engaged in small group discussions to determine the theme of a shared text and how it is conveyed, based on the details provided, in order to summarize its meaning. Each student had a role, such as questioner, facilitator, summarizer, predictor, and clarifier. Throughout the session, they focused one another on the task at hand based on their role. A review of work products demonstrated that students were able to determine the themes, “treat others as you would want to be treated” and, “we are all different in the world, so don’t make fun of others”. They provided reasons in their notes, and had discussions of why these themes were important, which connects to the State standards. However, teacher practices that promote this level of engagement and a coherent connection to the instructional focus was not evident in a few classes.

- In a fifth-grade math class, students collaboratively discussed their strategies and solutions for a word problem involving place value patterns. Students engaged in conversations with each other about their math strategies and the quality of each other’s work, commenting on whether their strategies, regardless of which one was chosen, were successful or not. However, in another math class, although students were provided with roles, such as resource managers or recorders, only some students were viewed taking on those roles with fidelity, while others were not as fully engaged. At times, the teacher’s questions led to limited answers, where most student responses were left to naming math skills or concepts, and only a few explaining with reasoning and conceptual thinking or ideas.

- In an abridged ELA class, students with disabilities worked at centers on their reading or writing skills. In a reading group, the teacher guided students in developing the central message, while others read independently. During the share, one student stated that the theme was “never break a promise to others”. Similarly, engagement was high in a third-grade math class, where students worked on their problem-solving skills using number sense concepts in small groups, each taking on a lead role discussing strategies with one another while attempting to produce an answer in their work products. However, in a science class, although students were provided with opportunities to turn and talk in their groups, the level of thinking in students’ responses did not evidence high levels of ownership. In a social studies class, although students engaged in a turn and talk, teacher questioning limited the nature of student responses to recall.
### 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

School staff ensures that the curricula are aligned to the State standards and makes purposeful decisions in choosing standards to focus on, such as determining claims in ELA, and number sense in math. Teachers consistently emphasize rigor in tasks across grades and subject areas for all students.

#### Impact

The curricula reflect tasks that focus on higher-order thinking skills, and across grades, build coherence and promote college and career readiness for all students.

#### Supporting Evidence

- This year, the teachers are adjusting their curricula to further align with the State standards. A review of ELA units reflects planning with a focus, including author's point of view, using relevant text evidence to support claims, and making inferences. In a seventh-grade unit on reading and writing perseverance, the unit goals require students to read different texts based on similar topics, to develop an understanding of characters, cite text evidence from multiple sources, make connections, and develop ideas to write a literary essay. Similarly, in a sixth-grade ELA unit on mythology and heroes, reading skills include analyzing character development and using text evidence to support answers to text-based questions. The unit plan states that students will be required to write an extended response in the form of a literary essay that includes a claim, and provides a concluding statement and evidence from the text. Therefore, across grades, units are building on skills to promote college and career readiness for all students.

- The math curricula focus on number sense and operations. All units are aligned to the State standards and integrate math vocabulary. In a fifth-grade unit plan on fractions, students are to work on adding, subtracting, comparing, and solving problems using decimals. Lesson plans include specific words, such as *round* and *sequence*, to reinforce the importance of math vocabulary with students. Similarly, in a third-grade unit, the plan focuses on writing addition and multiplication sentences, using arrays to write multiplication sentences, the use of the commutative property of multiplication, and to use multiplication to solve real-life word problems. The following terms are integrated into the unit: *equal groups, products, factor, and array*, thus promoting high-utility vocabulary in the curriculum.

- Across grades and subjects, tasks reflect rigorous skill-building, questions, and prompts to promote higher-order thinking for all students, including students with disabilities and English Language Learners (ELLs)/Multilingual Learners (MLLs). In a kindergarten social studies unit, one performance task prompts students to draw, label, and write responses to the following questions: “What are three things you do with, or learn from your family that are important?”, “What are three holidays or celebrations in your community?”, and "How do you observe/celebrate that day?" Students are then asked to pick cards to represent their answers to those questions and to respond using those cards. A sixth-grade ELA task prompts students to write a literary essay using multiple short texts and mythologies to answer, “What makes a hero?”, and “How does the journey affect a hero?” Taken together, teachers are planning tasks that promote rigorous thinking across the school.
Additional Finding

Quality Indicator: 2.2 Assessment  
Rating: Proficient

Findings

Across classrooms, teachers use and create rubrics and grading policies that are aligned with the school’s curricula and use schoolwide formative assessment monitoring tools to gather information. They consistently engage in ongoing checks for understanding and support student self-assessment.

Impact

Assessment practices provide actionable feedback to teachers that supports effective adjustments toward meeting student learning needs and provides students with next steps regarding their academic achievement.

Supporting Evidence

- Across classes, student-friendly rubrics are used in ELA and math. They are aligned to the curricula and standards and provide actionable feedback in the form of glows, for strengths, and grows, for areas of improvement. Students shared that they receive glows and grows from their teachers in different subject areas. In math, one student shared that his teacher told him to work on estimating the answer and checking with the exact number to ensure it was reasonable. Another student shared that her feedback was to work on breaking the structure of stanzas and suggested that she research different types of poems to help her look at different ways that poets craft their poetry to make their writing more meaningful.

- Across classes, teachers monitor student progress through checks for understanding, primarily through one-to-one and small-group conferences. Teachers use tracking tools called Cruisin Clipboards/Strategies Monitoring Form as a formative assessment to maintain a record of their daily interactions with their students and to follow-up on their areas for growth. Other methods observed were the use of red, yellow, and green check for understanding cards, which students used to show their teacher or their peers where their level of understanding was and to obtain assistance, if needed. After checking for student understanding in a seventh-grade ELA class, one teacher noted that students were showing difficulty in using their rubric and the associated literary terms that were provided as part of the task. As an adjustment in support of students’ learning needs, the teacher had the students use a circle map tool to assist them with identifying components of a compelling introduction and focus on terms and phrases like hook, and formulating structured sentences.

- Students reported that rubrics and checklists are commonly used for the purpose of self-assessment. In a fifth-grade math class, students used a four-point math rubric to self- and peer-assess to provide feedback to their peers. The teacher used these opportunities to listen-in, monitor the conversations, and use questioning to adjust instruction and address misconceptions, as some students’ demonstrated difficulty with place value, multiplication, and problem solving. Two students shared their strategies and self-assessed their process aloud in front of the class. One student stated, “Next time, I will need to really make sure I double check my multiplication and add more details to my response to get a better answer.” Across classes, students have opportunities to reflect on their practices and gauge next steps with the support of their teachers.
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

School staff consistently establishes a culture of high expectations for learning and consistently communicates those expectations to parents and students. College and career readiness are emphasized through a variety of programs and initiatives, with ongoing feedback shared with caregivers.

Impact

Ongoing feedback and support help families understand their children's progress. Detailed feedback and guidance for students prepares them to meet expectations and ensures their success at the next grade or school level.

Supporting Evidence

- Parents shared that teachers and school leaders make every effort to communicate their children’s progress throughout the year, using online communication platforms and personal contact through individual meetings with teachers, or progress reports. Other parent-friendly progress reports of their children’s performance on the school’s online common assessments are provided throughout the year. Parents shared that during parent workshops, especially in math this year, and through individual meetings with teachers, they review their children’s progress and are provided with tools and resources for support, enrichment, or both. These may include websites, content-based materials, or videos. Parents shared that the math workshops and curriculum night informed them of the new math expectations, which helped them assist their children with their homework. All parents agreed that the school faculty makes an ongoing effort to help them understand the school's expectations.

- There are several programs that expose students to a variety of opportunities connected to college and career readiness. In sixth-grade, students receive computer coding as part of their course work. In the middle school, students are offered trips to various college campuses, where they are able to participate in tours and have discussions with college students about their experiences, and how to best prepare themselves as middle school students in thinking about the future. Some students shared that they learned that in order to attend college, they must remain focused on their studies, learn about the need to “think outside the box,” and report that college was a “necessity,” which supports their understanding of what is essential for success at the next school level.

- High school articulation meetings are conducted by school leaders and the guidance counselor with students and parents, where various school directories are reviewed based on individual students’ interests and needs. Additionally, trips to high school fairs are conducted. Students reported that the guidance counselor regularly shares information and updates on high school applications. Students have received test preparation support for the specialized high school examinations this year. They have been guided through the specialized high school preparation process through the support of the teachers, school leaders, and guidance counselor. Those students who are not applying for high school yet are made aware of the next grade’s expectations through the use of cross-grade rubrics and ongoing conversations with teachers, who explain how to read their schoolwide rubrics so that students are aware of what the grade-level standards are and what it means to exceed them. One student stated that through monthly reviews of her work, she reflects on whether she is on grade level or not, and what she needs to do to get better grades and set higher goals for herself.
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**

The majority of the teachers are engaged in structured, inquiry–based vertical teams using protocols, and distributive leadership structures are in place for them to engage in professional collaborations.

**Impact**

Teacher teams promote implementation of the State standards, achievement of the school’s instructional goals, and enable teachers to use their leadership capacity to make key decisions on instruction. This strengthens teachers’ instructional capacity and supports positive student learning outcomes.

**Supporting Evidence**

- A grade three to six ELA vertical team met to review student work based on a recent ELA assessment. The teachers used a Looking at Student Work protocol for a group of third-grade students whose performance ranged from low to high. The focus of the review of their work was to determine whether the students were able to identify the main idea and support it with text evidence. After reviewing the student work samples, teachers noted some wonderings about close reading strategies, such as annotation, and whether students were using them effectively while reading for the purpose of understanding the text. Another wondering was whether students were aware that they could apply these strategies as they take their assessments, and could annotate questions as well. As a follow-up, teachers suggested to the presenting teacher that she explicitly model close reading while highlighting its purpose, use color coding, and reintroduce a checklist to help students monitor themselves, which are the team’s prioritized next steps toward meeting the school’s ELA goals and State standards.

- The vertical data inquiry team reviewed their most recent results of the ELL/MLL fall baseline assessment to identify patterns and trends and developed questions using the Notice and Wonder protocol. One trend that the teachers noticed when comparing the results to the New York State English as a Second Language Test Target of Measurement and New Language Arts Progressions for grade five was that most of the students demonstrated difficulty with central ideas, themes, and analysis of character development, which was similar to a trend that surfaced from the ELA exam. As a next step, teachers chose to dive deeper into the types of texts given on the ELL baseline assessment, and will be using a tool to determine the Lexile and grade level of the texts in this exam. This tool will be used to determine instructional next steps to support the ELLs/MLLS in their classes, thus building their instructional capacity as a team around the instruction for this specific subgroup.

- Teachers work in teams and across grade bands to make key instructional decisions to support student learning. One such decision was to shift the use of anthologies to novels for more in-depth studies of texts. To support writing, teachers have integrated more grammar to enhance the quality of work products. Curriculum maps were altered in math to increase student engagement in number sense.