Quality Review Report

2019-2020

South Bronx International Middle School
Junior High-Intermediate-Middle 09X593

1000 Teller Avenue
Bronx
NY 10456

Principal: Alison Angrisani

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

Lead Reviewer: Buffie Whitfield
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

South Bronx International Middle School serves students in grade 6 through grade 7. 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>To what extent does the school…</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>Area of Focus</td>
<td>Developing</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>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

<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>1.4 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>
<td>Proficient</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>Proficient</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

### Systems for Improvement

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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>1.3 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>Proficient</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>Proficient</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>
<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>Proficient</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>
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</tbody>
</table>
### 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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</table>

**Findings**

The school leadership uses the Danielson *Framework for Teaching* for targeted observations to analyze learning outcomes, to elevate schoolwide teaching practices and to provide effective and intentional feedback.

**Impact**

School leaders’ use of data from observations and the Danielson *Framework* provides meaningful feedback to teachers, fostering professional growth leading to improved teaching practice.

**Supporting Evidence**

- During observation conferences the principal refers to student work and previous evaluator notes to ensure clarity of expectations for teacher growth. During feedback sessions, teachers are also encouraged to seek support from teacher leaders who are an integral part of the feedback loop. New teachers receive additional visits and feedback from both administration and lead teachers with a specific focus on assessment-driven questions and lesson discussions to support teachers in honing their skills. These strategic and collaborative endeavors allow administrators and selected teacher peers to provide meaningful support to all teachers, resulting in their improved levels of effectiveness in component 4e – Growing and developing professionally as evidenced by observations to date in the *Advance* data.

- During the initial planning conferences, the principal uses the time with each teacher to set his/her professional goals for the school year. Consequently, the principal purposefully utilizes the observation cycles and the teachers’ professional goals as checkpoints to provide feedback and support, and to inform and adjust professional development planning. During the course of the school year, school leaders and teachers are revising and refining goals, having discussions, and teachers receive verbal and written feedback after formal and informal observations. The principal has in-depth conversations with teachers about effective teaching practices and the impact on student outcomes. Teachers stated that they learn from one another and attend more workshops to enhance their knowledge of content and pedagogical skills.

- The principal gives detailed feedback to teachers capturing their strengths and indicating suggested examples for their instructional growth. In the teacher meeting, teachers stated that feedback is purposeful with concrete examples for improvement. The teachers shared that the principal provides clear next steps and is quite supportive. One teacher stated, “She is a coach to us, and her feedback is valued and well-received.” This year, teachers are continuing to plan for cognitively challenging tasks. Through ongoing focused observations and follow-up support, supervisors have developed a cycle of continual improvement where feedback is specific, evidence-based, actionable, and timely.
Area of Focus

<table>
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<tr>
<th>Quality Indicator:</th>
<th>1.1 Curriculum</th>
<th>Rating:</th>
<th>Developing</th>
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Findings

Curricula and academic tasks reflect the process of aligning the school’s work to the State Standards and planning to provide students access. However, curricula and tasks inconsistently emphasize rigorous habits and higher-order skills across grades and subjects.

Impact

Consistent access to and ownership of rigorous curricula that cognitively engage all students, including English Language Learners (ELLs), Multilingual Learners (MLLs), and students with disabilities is uneven. This unevenness hinders college and career readiness for all students.

Supporting Evidence

- South Bronx International Middle School is part of Internationals Network for Public Schools (INPS) and serves newcomer ELLs who have been in the United States for four years or less. Their approach to supporting their students is to provide them with interdisciplinary skills and a comprehensive literacy program that includes close reading, independent reading, guided reading, and reading remediation. Through the INPS partnership, the curriculum is guided by five Core Principles – heterogeneity and collaboration, experiential learning, language and content integration, localized autonomy and responsibility and one learning model for all. Some departments have clearly defined criteria for what students need to know and identify, and they imbed specific college and career readiness skills connected to reading, writing, speaking, listening, and language, as well as connections to real-world applications coherently across all curricula documents. However, in math, curricular documents asked students to answer a simple computation without challenging students to defend strategies, construct viable arguments and critique the reasoning of others.

- One of the school’s curriculum initiatives is to build and strengthen units. Teams are at different stages in developing rigorous curricula and performance tasks. Tasks challenge students to write extended responses on some assignments, such as one in social studies describing how colonists, women and slaves rebelled during colonial times. These writing tasks demonstrate the development of the stamina students need to be college and career ready. However, many student work products, such as quizzes and tests in math, reflect low-level multiple choice or short-response questions without the higher levels of rigor required for extended written responses. These inconsistencies in the units and tasks hinder some students from having opportunities to access high-level academic tasks that develop higher-order thinking skills and meaningful engagement.

- Lesson plans across content areas do not yet consistently show evidence of scaffolded questions, discussion, writing to integrate literacy into cross-content instruction for all subjects. For example, in an English Language Arts (ELA) lesson unit, visual aids were included to provide information for students on the habits of effective reading. But overall, upon review across curricula documents, writing-to-learn strategies, embedded stop and jots, free writes, and formal reflections, are inconsistent. During the student interview, some students including ELLs, MLLs, and students with disabilities stated the work is not challenging.
Additional Finding

<table>
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<tr>
<th>Quality Indicator:</th>
<th>1.2 Pedagogy</th>
<th>Rating:</th>
<th>Developing</th>
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Findings
There is an uneven application across classrooms of differentiation and other instructional strategies to provide appropriately challenging and rigorous learning opportunities that promote high achievement.

Impact
There is uneven engagement in challenging tasks and discussions do not always reflect high levels of thinking and participation.

Supporting Evidence

- The delivery of instruction inconsistently provides questioning techniques that foster discussions and are appropriately challenging for all learners. In a few classes, students who participated in class discussions are beginning to use accountable conversation prompts. For instance, in some classes, students were prompted to turn-and-talk, but as the class was void of accountable talk stems to promote discussions and tiered questions, student engagement waned. Students were not asked to cite evidence in ELA and social studies, and responses students provided were subjective. Students in math were not asked to provide proof or reason behind their answers. Some teachers allowed students to build upon a classmate’s response. But, more often than not, teachers in numerous classrooms essentially repeated answers and evaluated the accuracy of student responses themselves rather than inviting the class to agree, disagree, elaborate upon the responses of their peers, or ask questions of one another.

- In a math class, the teacher posed rapid-fire questions, and students, including ELLs, responded chorally to the teacher. Most of the questions asked by the teacher were closed-ended and process-oriented. Questions included “What's the next step?” and “What is the correct answer?” Math concepts were not referenced. Although students may have understood how to calculate the right answer, the teacher did not allow students to present their strategy or explain why their answers were correct. Although lessons are planned with an emphasis on differentiation, the instruction that is implemented is often teacher-centered with missed opportunities for student-to-student discussion.

- During an ELA lesson, students analyzed the myth of Cronus using annotation and thinking maps. The teacher asked students to compare two stories. Students annotated the story with notes. As the teacher circulated throughout the room, she encouraged students' thinking by asking them why they gave certain answers. Such high levels of thinking were not apparent across classrooms.
Findings

Teachers across classrooms create specific rubrics and grading policies that are aligned with the school's curricula and tailored for the content. Results of common assessments in ELA and math are analyzed using a logic model to determine progress toward grade-level goals.

Impact

Analyses of assessment results and student achievement are used to adjust curricula and instructional programming. Teachers provide actionable feedback to students regarding their achievement.

Supporting Evidence

- Schoolwide grading policy uses mastery-based grading and is aligned to three schoolwide practices – annotation, discourse triads and paragraph writing. Many tasks are accompanied by rubrics and learning targets. For example, on a group discussion assignment, students were tasked to share and revise ideas and describe a country using the five themes of geography. The rubric for this task emphasized sentence structure and sharing cooperatively via group goals.

- Teachers analyze the baseline beginning-of-year performance of students and use the results of the analysis to set short-, medium-, and long-term mastery goals for students by grade in ELA or math content areas. This information is tracked and shared using models that show trends in performance. Most teachers create and administer baseline assessments in each course. Teachers use programmatic assessments such as iReady to determine learning gaps in ELA and math. The data from this system provide feedback to the student and the teacher on the progress individuals and groups of students are making toward mastery of the content. Teachers use data to form small groups for instruction in math and literacy. As a result of the streamlined approach to intervention, 80 percent of students showed growth on Independent Reading Level Assessment (IRLA) of one to two reading levels over the course of the year. This is monumental since 40 percent of the students are Students with Interrupted Formal Education (SIFE). One report showed 43 percent progress on the New York State English as a Second Language Achievement Test with movement from one level to the next with the majority of students showing growth within levels.

- Diagnostic online assessments are administered to all students in ELA and math. Teachers track student progress on those assessments and use the information to group students in classes for differentiated reading and math instruction. Trackers capture students' level of understanding from baseline assessments noting gains and declines as either significant or not based on expected growth. Small group instruction is broken up into individual classes in ELA and math for those that need remedial support and those who are close to mastery and can be challenged through extensions. Teachers strategically support these students who performed at comparable levels. Furthermore, benchmark data guides student grouping. Additionally, results are used to assign additional differentiated online work to support student achievement.
Additional Finding

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

School leaders have established a culture for learning that communicates high expectations to the entire staff. School leaders and staff effectively communicate expectations connected to a path to college and career readiness to families.

Impact

The school provides training to staff and has a system of accountability to provide meaningful feedback to families about progress of their children towards goals.

Supporting Evidence

- The principal shares high expectations with staff during faculty and professional development meetings. Non-negotiables asserted from the principal are learning targets and agendas that are posted and referred to during the lesson. The principal expressed the expectation that teachers understand each student’s entry point to support continued growth. This was evidenced by a review of the professional development plan and agendas from professional learning sessions as well as observation feedback of teacher practice. Teachers shared that the high expectations that the principal has developed are communicated through observation feedback. They stated that principal is a “teacher of teachers” and modeled for them which makes them feel comfortable.

- Parents shared that teachers offer guidance and support and regularly send updates on their children’s progress via phone and email outreach. Parents stated that the school offers workshops on the Common Core Learning Standards to help them better understand the expectations of those standards. During the parent meeting, it was shared that school leaders and teachers have an open-door policy, allowing parents to call or stop by at any time of the school day to discuss their children’s social and academic progress. Parents also noted that progress reports and meetings with teachers help with understanding their children’s progress in school and how they can help them at home. One parent shared that after meeting with her child’s teacher, the link for a website was provided to use at home which helped increase the student’s reading level this year.

- School leaders communicate explicit expectations via bulletin boards, monthly newsletters, and assemblies and workshops for students and their families. Monthly calendars distributed to parents convey details on assessments, school and district events, and other information. Support for families, including family curriculum nights, orientation, and English classes for parents to gain language proficiency.
Additional Finding

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<tr>
<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 teachers are engaged in structured inquiry-based professional collaborations that promote student achievement, especially toward the school goal of improved writing. Additionally, distributed leadership structures are in place for teachers to support improved student learning.

Impact

Grade-level inquiry work has strengthened the instructional capacity of teachers while also providing the opportunity to voice their ideas to impact key decisions that affect student learning across the school and their own professional experiences.

Supporting Evidence

- Teachers also collaborate to support each other as part of the peer intervisitation program. Teachers rotate to visit each other during instructional periods along with school leaders and coaches. They provide feedback to each other using low-inference observations. A teacher reflected on her experience as a peer observer and wrote that "it helped me evaluate my own strengths and weaknesses as well as adopt some strategies from champion teachers for my own teaching practice." Inquiry work provides teachers an opportunity to share differentiated tools and scaffolds that enhance their instructional delivery, while also providing more resources to increase student achievement. During an observation of a grade six team, teachers shared patterns and trends they noted from students. Additionally, the team developed strategies to support their students' development of good conclusions. Suggestions included having student restate and annotate questions.

- Teachers support one another through leadership roles that provide opportunities to improve learning across the school. To better support subject-specific departments, lead teachers assist with curriculum development, lesson design, and in-class implementation of techniques. Teacher leads articulated that they felt empowered to be included on decisions towards the development and support of their peers. For example, during the teacher meeting, teachers spoke about support from each other and having the time to work together.

- Teachers state that multiple professional collaborations each week are leading to improved practices and student outcomes as a result of implementing new teaching strategies, such as conferencing techniques, in their classrooms. For example, teachers are exploring ways to improve small-group instruction facilitation. One teacher explained that as a result of working with colleagues, she loves feedback. Teachers have been given input to implement new curricula. The staff understands that questions, concerns, and suggestions can go directly to the principal.