

Quality Review Report

2016-2017

J.H.S. 050 John D. Wells

Junior High-Intermediate-Middle 14K050

**183 South 3rd St.
Brooklyn
NY 11211**

Principal: Benjamin Honoroff

**Dates of Review:
April 20, 2017 - April 21, 2017**

Lead Reviewer: Marion Wilson

The Quality Review Report

The Quality Review is a two-day school visit by an experienced educator. During the review, the reviewer visits classrooms, talks with parents, students, teachers, and school leaders and uses a rubric to evaluate how well the school is organized to support student achievement.

The Quality Review Report provides a rating for all ten indicators of the Quality Review Rubric in three categories: Instructional Core, School Culture, and Systems for Improvement. One indicator is identified as the **Area of Celebration** to highlight an area in which the school does well to support student learning and achievement. One indicator is identified as the **Area of Focus** to highlight an area the school should work on to support student learning and achievement. The remaining indicators are identified as **Additional Finding**. This report presents written findings, impact, and site-specific supporting evidence for six indicators.

Information about the School

J.H.S. 050 John D. Wells 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		
<i>To what extent does the school...</i>	Area	Rating
1.1 Ensure engaging, rigorous, and coherent curricula in all subjects, accessible for a variety of learners and aligned to Common Core Learning Standards and/or content standards	Additional Finding	Proficient
1.2 Develop teacher pedagogy from a coherent set of beliefs about how students learn best that is informed by the instructional shifts and Danielson Framework for Teaching, aligned to the curricula, engaging, and meets the needs of all learners so that all students produce meaningful work products	Additional Finding	Proficient
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	Area of Focus	Proficient

School Quality Ratings continued

School Culture		
<i>To what extent does the school...</i>	Area	Rating
1.4 Maintain a culture of mutual trust and positive attitudes that supports the academic and personal growth of students and adults	Additional Finding	Proficient
3.4 Establish a culture for learning that communicates high expectations to staff, students and families, and provide supports to achieve those expectations	Additional Finding	Proficient
Systems for Improvement		
<i>To what extent does the school...</i>	Area	Rating
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	Additional Finding	Well Developed
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	Additional Finding	Proficient
4.1 Observe teachers using the Danielson Framework for Teaching along with the analysis of learning outcomes to elevate school-wide instructional practices and implement strategies that promote professional growth and reflection	Area of Celebration	Well Developed
4.2 Engage in structured professional collaborations on teams using an inquiry approach that promotes shared leadership and focuses on improved student learning	Additional Finding	Proficient
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 the CCLS	Additional Finding	Proficient

Area of Celebration

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

Feedback to teachers captures strengths, challenges, and next steps using the Danielson *Framework for Teaching*, with clearly outlined expectations for teacher practice. School leaders strategically observe teachers and coordinate professional development (PD) to make informed decisions.

Impact

Individual teacher growth is documented over time and accompanied by reflection, goal setting, and evidence of improved student outcomes. Schoolwide teacher growth and development is measured over time and coordinated with schoolwide professional development and student achievement goals.

Supporting Evidence

- The principal conducts at least three observations per week and visits each teacher in a non-evaluative manner once per week. Observation data is then used to support teachers' professional development and to increase student proficiency in writing short and extended responses. Teachers shared that their focus on questioning and discussion techniques from the supports they are provided for teachers including a dedicated math coach who works with special education teachers in an Integrated Co-Teaching setting. There is also a professional development learning series for the science department based on the results of observations of science classrooms. The principal noticed that there were insufficient hands-on opportunities for students to engage in scientific inquiry and developed a plan to support science instruction. For example, in a sample observation report, the administrator noted the teacher's ability to facilitate student discussions about strategies and ideas in a way to help them better understand the science they learned. During the teacher team meeting, one teacher shared, "The principal believes in us sharing best practice and focuses on the expertise of teachers who are already in the building."
- Throughout the school, there is a common understanding of what effective teaching looks and sounds like, including strategies to support students with disabilities and English Language Learners (ELLs), which supports the school's goals and core beliefs about learning. Evidence from sample observation reports shows that the principal has been consistent in his feedback to teachers to ensure regular teacher development. The majority of teachers shared that the principal's feedback captures their strengths, challenges, and provides them with insightful and specific meaningful next steps to help them improve their practice. One teacher stated, "The principal gives us immediate verbal feedback and then follows up with a concrete action plan that makes sense to us to follow." Teachers remarked that the principal's open door policy as a school site administrator has allowed them to have in-depth conversations, and he always articulates clear expectations for teacher practice.
- The principal can articulate a clear and systematic rationale for how he conducts cycles of observations, including patterns of feedback, and the professional development plan. PD decisions are based on an analysis of teacher progress based on previous feedback, teacher effectiveness data, and student work products. For example, trends in teacher feedback reports led to a plan to strengthen teacher understanding of effective pedagogical practices as well as content-area strengths. Trends from observation reports indicated a need for teachers to improve their skills in two areas: language acquisition strategies and the use of student discussion protocols. With the assistance of teacher leaders, the principal developed and coordinated PD to help teachers improve their approach, using Making Thinking Visible for student discussion protocols and implementing Word Generation schoolwide for strategies to help students acquire academic vocabulary. As a result, there is a significant amount of student-to-student dialogue across classrooms. Students are incorporating academic language into their speaking and writing, as demonstrated on writing performance tasks.

Area of Focus

Quality Indicator:	2.2 Assessment	Rating:	Proficient
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Findings

Across classrooms, most teachers use rubrics and checklists aligned with the school's curricula programs. The school uses *iReady* assessments to determine student progress toward goals across grades and most subject areas.

Impact

While most teachers provide students with actionable feedback that students use to improve their work, there were missed opportunities for meaningful feedback in the vast majority of classrooms. Teachers use assessment data across subject areas to adjust curricula and instruction, however, this has not yet resulted in all students demonstrating increased mastery on state assessments.

Supporting Evidence

- Student work samples evidenced teacher-written actionable feedback directing students to the steps they should take to strengthen their work. On a grade-six argumentative essay, examples of teacher written feedback refer students to use higher level vocabulary to further develop their argument. Other examples of teacher-written feedback across grades included feedback to have students add more evidence to strengthen their claims and reread their explanations before submitting to make sure it is explaining the main point for each side. Students shared that they received rubrics before completing tasks in reading and writing and, most times, in other subjects. During the small group meeting, students could verbally share how they could improve their work from one assignment to the next. Actionable feedback is given both verbally and in writing to students across most subject areas. However, high leverage and meaningful feedback that impacts students' ability to understand, internalize, and articulate what they need to do to improve as learners is mostly seen on writing products and not as strategically shared across other subject areas.
- Across the school, student groups were determined based on relevant assessment data. Students were assigned to tasks and activities in math, reading, science, and social studies. Teachers utilize the results from quizzes, tasks, and other common assessments to determine the course of the activities listed in the curricula or to change their chosen instructional strategy. Disaggregated data is being tracked for English Language Learners as well as students with disabilities, but it has not yet resulted in increased mastery for these subgroups. Data from common assessment results prompted school faculty to introduce strategies to help students earn more points in their constructed responses. Teachers researched different inter-disciplinary strategies and decided to the adjust lessons and instructional strategies based on assessment results.
- Assessment choices are aligned to the Common Core Learning Standards (CCLS) and allowed a view a variety and range of data including the use of *iReady* to improve instructional practices. School staff also utilizes the *Degrees of Reading Power* (DRP) literacy assessment tool to periodically measure students' reading comprehension in order to pinpoint interventions and align resources that are needed to support the curricula choices. Data from assessment have been used to target specific students for the before school math academy and also for the daily push in tutoring for students as needed. The analysis of state assessment data has resulted in the math department shifting the way the curricula is arranged and creating a balance of both procedural and conceptual understanding through error analysis.

Additional Finding

Quality Indicator:	1.1 Curriculum	Rating:	Proficient
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Findings

Curricula and academic tasks consistently emphasize rigorous habits and higher-order skills across grades and subjects, including for English Language Learners (ELLs) and students with disabilities. Activities and tasks are planned and refined for a diversity of learners using student work and data.

Impact

Most tasks are rigorous and planned to afford students opportunities to create meaning, integrate skills into processes, and use prior knowledge to solve real-world problems. Teachers across most grades and departments use student work and data to plan and refine curricula and academic tasks to engage a diversity of students.

Supporting Evidence

- Rigorous habits and higher-order skills are found in lesson plans consistent across most grades and subjects. Lesson plans listed different strategies to engage a diversity of learners. For example, one lesson plan stated that students would be grouped according to their performance on the most recent in class activity. Students were offered opportunities to solve equations in math using the circle the important information, underline the question, box the word, and eliminate unnecessary information (CUBE) strategy in solving math word problems. Tasks also included graphic organizers such as the Frayer model for students to define terms, such as linear function, by listing the characteristics and/or facts, giving examples in the form of synonyms, and non-examples as antonyms. These types of supports were seen throughout written documents presented across most subject areas. Other supports seen throughout lesson plans included the daily push-in of a certified English as a New Language (ENL) teacher to work with the classroom teacher to enhance student learning.
- In a sample written lesson plan, instructional activities included opportunities for students to pose problems and questions, think flexibly, use metacognition, think and communicate with precision, and persist through complex tasks. Lesson plans afford students multiple opportunities to read about real-world problems according to their Lexile levels, use technology to research issues, consider multiple points of view, and apply standards of mathematical practices in multistep problems. For example, one lesson plan emphasized that students would have to make a visual model and explain their thinking. On another activity task sheet, one question asked students to reflect on whether the use of a particular strategy helped them solve the problem more readily. Supports listed in most plans include the use of word-sorting activities or chunking strategies to support learners in reading grade-level materials. Most lesson plans emphasize the need for students to utilize multiple means of engagement and representation of materials through complex tasks, asking students to synthesize information, compare and contrast opposing viewpoints, predict outcomes, and analyze their own thinking.
- Unit and lesson plans contain modifications around multiple entry points. Most plans contain strategies for ELLs, including using glossaries, highlighting relationships between cognates in English and Spanish, and placing line numbers in reading passages. Changes in lesson plans are made from the original Expeditionary Learning (EL) unit plans to meet the needs of students, including the use of translated tasks and activities. In one written document presented, a social studies lesson plan called for the teacher to show a painting to build background knowledge and then present a short video clip or additional artwork to help students engage with a complex text.

Additional Finding

Quality Indicator:	1.2 Pedagogy	Rating:	Proficient
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Findings

Across most classes, teaching practices are aligned to the curricula and reflect the school's beliefs about incorporating student voice, improving academic language acquisition, and providing small-group instruction. Student work products and discussions reflect high levels of student participation across grades and subjects.

Impact

Teachers consistently reflect and support schoolwide beliefs about how students learn best, which is informed by the Danielson *Framework for Teaching*. Most students in classrooms produce work and engage in discussions that reflect critical thinking and problem solving.

Supporting Evidence

- During the teacher team instructional meeting, teachers shared that they believe all students are capable of learning. To that end, students should have opportunities to discuss and interact with each other using evidence, to receive direct instruction through modeling and a hands-on interdisciplinary approach focused on reading across content areas, and to be provided with tools for language acquisition. Similarly, the principal articulated that academic language acquisition is an essential part of increasing student reading comprehension and that teachers should tend to this in their lessons regardless of content area. Across most classes visited, there was evidence of instructional activities that were based on these core beliefs. For example, an eighth-grade English Language Arts (ELA) Integrated Co-Teaching class with ELLs and students with disabilities included a push-in ENL teacher who supported small group work. Students asked questions of each other and facilitated the conversation as they used a tennis chart to capture who spoke and when. Students were working cooperatively, charged with determining the meaning of words and citing evidence from a video they had watched earlier about refugees and their impact on the countries where they had relocated.
- Students in most classes were able to think creatively, show innovation, and problem solve. Students also had opportunities to participate in turn and talks and debate issues using a Word Generation protocol for reading authentic articles about controversial topics and then speaking and writing about their positions. In one humanities class, students spoke about the right to bear arms and curbing gun violence across the United States. A lively debate ensued among student groups as each group had to come up with both pros and cons for their positions. The learning target for the lesson was, "I can engage in a small group debate. I can use the Word Generation focus words to develop my argument." While students did not always remember to cite evidence from the text to support their thinking, they were able to think creatively and speak with knowledge from their previous research about the topic.
- There are opportunities for student-to-student dialogue, the use of academic vocabulary, and evidence-based accountable talk built into lessons. Most students can articulate what they are working towards, why it is important, and how it will help them later in life. In a self-contained science class visited, students worked in stations as they looked at plant and animal cells through microscopes and engaged in other hands-on activities. Students were also required to closely read passages on viable topics with real-time implications. Most lesson activities utilized resources that ensured students could develop an argument, reason analytically, read to find evidence, and discuss various perspectives while engaging in debate.

Additional Finding

Quality Indicator:	3.4 High Expectations	Rating:	Proficient
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Findings

School leaders consistently communicate high expectations for professionalism, instruction, and communication to teachers and staff based on peace and justice, respect, innovation, determination, and empathy (PRIDE). Teachers communicate with families on a regular basis to help them understand student progress towards college readiness expectations.

Impact

The principal creates expectations for all staff members which is evidenced through verbal and written structures and holds teachers accountable for expectations for curriculum planning and teacher team meetings. Parents receive timely information on student progress through an online communication tool and receive training in how to use communication tools.

Supporting Evidence

- The school's mantra known as PRIDE helps with the established collective mindset about expectations for school culture, teaching, learning, and structures for school improvement. Most initiatives are communicated through the PRIDE lens in newsletters and, often, through daily face-to-face conversations with various stakeholders in the school community. There are also weekly communication emails sent out to staff regarding best practices seen from walkthrough visits and to reiterate expectations for student performance. Most importantly, the principal communicates his high expectations for PD and self-reflection by modeling for school staff on a consistent basis. He also ensures that he incorporates staff input into communications sent out to families to support students.
- Most teachers work in teams to implement effective strategies for communicating high expectations about college and career readiness and partner with families to ensure students are able to meet expectations to exit a grade. During the parent meeting, parents shared that they receive information and communication via texts, emails, and phone calls on a regular basis so that they have a better understanding of what students are learning in school. Parents receive real-time information about homework and can go to different websites for help to support their children's acquisition of English.
- The school has a Parent Teacher Home Visit Project (PTHVP) where teachers visit students' homes to engage with families and share their expectations of both the school and families. These visits have resulted in greater parent participation at school events. In addition, parents have a better understanding of how they can help support the school in regard to increasing student learning outcomes. School staff shared that these visits have helped bridge the connection between home and school life, deepening the level of trust and communication between families and the school. In addition, El Puente, a community based organization, worked closely with the school to implement an effective system of communication in both Spanish and English. This includes hosting meetings using simultaneous translation technology for ESL and General Equivalent Diploma (GED) classes for parents.
- During a teacher-team meeting, teachers shared that the principal has informal conversations with them about lesson planning, team meetings, and effective strategies they should be utilizing in their classrooms. Teachers also shared that through mentors, buddy teachers, consultants, and district staff, there are support structures in place to ensure that teachers meet or on their way to exceeding expectations. The majority of teachers shared that the coordinated supports from consultants and lead teachers have helped them make improvements to their teaching practice.

Additional Finding

Quality Indicator:	4.2 Teacher Teams and Leadership Development	Rating:	Proficient
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Findings

The majority of teachers are engaged in structured, inquiry-based professional collaborations using protocols to unpack curricula, examine student work, and analyze assessment data. Teachers consistently analyze the results from iReady benchmark assessments in reading and math to note student progress towards meeting the Common Core Learning Standards.

Impact

Teacher teams work collaboratively and share insights with each another to further help build coherence of teacher practices across grades and subjects. Teams monitor student data including running records and math and reading assessment data to inform curricula adjustments and improve student learning.

Supporting Evidence

- Teachers meet in different ways across the school, including in departmental and grade teams, as they utilize protocols to unpack curricula and examine student work products to inform curricula adjustments and lesson development. Teachers collaborate using a shared Google Drive to upload curricula, lessons, resources, and on-going action plans related to their work. Most teacher teams utilize a *Kid-Talk* protocol to surface academic and social-emotional strengths and challenges for students and develop appropriate teaching interventions. As a result, teachers discuss interdisciplinary approaches to working with target students.
- During the teacher-team meeting, teachers shared that their work has resulted in adjusting rubrics and trying to norm them for writing and reading activities. Teacher team work has helped the school to develop instructional tasks based on the results from *iReady*. In addition, inquiry work revealed that students needed more hands-on manipulatives and specific strategies to help them work on complex tasks. For example, teachers shared that assessment results first revealed that the curricula resource did not include the necessary modifications for diverse learners. In turn teachers helped students in their writing by advising them to state the claim, provide proof, and cite evidence (CPAC) when writing a constructed response. When students were still not making as much progress in their written responses as they had hoped, teachers regrouped to revise and adjust the chosen strategy to help students in focusing on writing the claim, supporting it with proof, providing an explanation, and then writing a strong conclusion (CPEC) for use across other departments. Similarly, the math department reinforced students the CUBE strategy for solving math word problems. As a result of their inquiry work, teachers in the ELA department noticed that eighth-grade students began making stronger claims and citing more high-leverage evidence, consequently receiving higher rubric scores on their writing pieces.
- As a result of reviewing assessment data, teachers focused on level one and two students who could be pushed to level three, known to the school as pushables, and monitored their performance on a more regular basis. Teachers noticed that after their most recent test administration, there was a 21 percent growth in ELA scores and similarly a seven percent increase on math *iReady* assessments. Teachers meet regularly and look at student writing samples to determine the effectiveness of strategies being taught and the need to make adjustments to curricula materials. Teachers are improving their practice in helping students incorporate strategies learned in ELA and math to other subject areas.