

Quality Review Report

2016-2017

I.S. 219 New Venture School

Junior High-Intermediate-Middle 09X219

**3630 Third Ave.
Bronx
NY 10456**

Principal: Dominic Cipollone

**Dates of Review:
May 9, 2017 - May 10, 2017**

Lead Reviewer: Clarence Williams Jr.

The Quality Review Report

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

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

Information about the School

I.S. 219 New Venture School 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	Area of Celebration	Well Developed
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	Additional Finding	Proficient
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:	1.4 Positive Learning Environment	Rating:	Well Developed
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Findings

The school community has a theoretical approach to inclusivity among students to build culture and support social emotional needs and safety. Strategic structures are in place that support family outreach and student academic development.

Impact

The school structure is set up under a plan of action so that student voices are valued towards leading school improvement efforts. Students have adopted the responsibility of representing their community. The learning environment reflects an atmosphere that supports the academic and personal behaviors designed to support student growth.

Supporting Evidence

- Student voices are valued within the school community. The school community has a student youth council. Student council members have been strategically placed on the school-based leadership team. On this team, students lead the organizing of Community Day. This is a community-based school forum that involves parents, community members, and students, giving everyone a platform to hear concerns and provide support for the upcoming school year. Stakeholders are educated on school practices and how the school community can be involved with supporting the school. In addition to planning this even, students took the lead role in serve as ambassadors of the school. Students all fill out surveys on areas of improvement that the school environment needs. Students stated that the bathrooms needed to be cleaned. After the survey results came out, all students stated that all bathrooms have been cleaner. Students also lead a program called Movers and Shakers. This program partners students with other students to assist with schoolwork help ensure and increase new students' success. Students interviewed stated that it was one of their favorite things about the school.
- School leaders and staff ensure that students are performing in a safe school setting. This is done through a program called City Connects that allows the school to partner with higher education institutions that provide social emotional support to students and families and work with challenging students. As a result, the online occurrence reporting system (OORS) shows that the school has reduced suspensions from thirty-six last year at this time to nine this year. Parents and students have both stated that one of their favorite things about the school is safety. During a parent interview, a parent stated, "The security and staff members make my child feel safe coming to school. She likes to go to school." A student stated, "We used to have bullying problems before but now that never happens."
- The school community opened a wellness center to support social emotional growth of students. The center has two full-time social workers, with parental consent for services ranging from medical, dental and mental health issues. The school wellness center supports students and families with immunizations and health issues. The school community also has a Dream Center. This referral-based program allows students to have support when they are frustrated and provides them with engaging activities to redirect their behavior. Teachers have stated that this additional level of intervention not only decreased behavioral issues but also inspired students to stay in school. The school also has structures in place so that all students are known by an adult in the building. All students benefit from life skills classes taught by the school counselor. Students also participate in the Success Mentors program. This program involves students serving as mentors to fellow students in a twelve-to-one ratio to discuss academic and school community concerns.

Area of Focus

Quality Indicator:	2.2 Assessment	Rating:	Proficient
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Findings

Assessments and rubrics are used across classrooms. While teachers check for understanding during classroom instruction, this is not occurring across the vast majority of classrooms.

Impact

Teachers provided actionable feedback to students regarding their progress. Teachers make adjustments to meet the needs of their students although students are not always aware of their next learning steps.

Supporting Evidence

- Teachers use rubrics to provide actionable feedback to students. A writing rubric was presented that provided a self-assessment, peer-assessment, and the teacher's assessment. The rubric had four points ranging from attempting standards to exceeding standards. In one example presented, a student rated himself a three in document integration, argument, and reasoning of evidence. His peer rated him the same. The teacher's ratings differed in the area of argument, rating the student a two. At the bottom of the rubric, the teacher provided additional feedback by stating glows and grows for the student. The glow stated, "Great job using your document-based evidence." The grow included, "Next time have a clear claim and counter-claim." An additional example was seen in a math class. The teacher provided feedback stating, "Great job staying on task, your next steps are discussing what values the variables can be based on the inequality to prove mastery." This was not evident in the vast majority of classes.
- To meet the needs of students, learning adjustments are made during instruction. A math self-contained class was observed in which the teacher was using an online answer-selection platform. This platform allows students to answer questions online and instantly provides the teacher with real-time data to make adjustments or arrange working groups. After looking at the data from a question, the teacher observed that five out of 12 students answered a question incorrectly. The teacher placed students into heterogeneous groups to work with each other. The instructor did, however, tell the students to use their sticky notes to jot down evidence of the theme of the story. Although students went into different groups, they were not clear of their next steps. One student stated, "What are we supposed to do now?"
- Other methods of checking for understanding included restating the question. In an ELA class, students struggled with the term *end table* while they were trying to create a three-dimensional model. The teacher used the word to describe what the shape should look like. When they did not understand the question, the teacher discovered that students did not know what an end table was. As a result, the teacher restated the question so that the focus was not on the term end table but on how the shape should look.

Additional Finding

Quality Indicator:	1.1 Curriculum	Rating:	Proficient
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Findings

The curriculum is aligned to the Common Core Learning Standards and instructional shifts. Student performance is used to refine the curriculum.

Impact

The curriculum tasks promote college and career readiness and cognitive engagement for all students including English Language Learners (ELLs) and students with disabilities.

Supporting Evidence

- The curriculum demonstrates the integration of Common Core Learning Standards. A grade-six unit on *World Wonders*, demonstrated literacy standards in areas of citing textual evidence, determining the central idea and the meaning of words and phrases. The unit shows the skills that are related to the standards that students are required to master. These include requiring students to cite evidence from the text to support analysis and “analyze word choice/impact of sentences or phrases impact on the text.”
- Instructional shifts are evident in instructional documents. In an ELA lesson plan on what is activism, students were required to engage in discussions around a text on Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. The lesson required students to turn and talk about points made in the text and how to define activism, which also demonstrates the shift that applies to academic vocabulary. An additional shift was seen in this lesson in which students were required to build knowledge about the world, specifically how Martin Luther King influenced the world, using the evidence from the text.
- Teachers based curricula refinements and adjustments on students’ performance. An example was seen in an English Language Arts curriculum map. In the unit on stories of survival, the most recent assessment showed that students struggled with comprehension. Therefore, the unit was extended to allow for chunking. The map states that students will work on poems as a summative assessment to gauge comprehension before moving to the next unit. Additionally, the map was modified to extend the unit on literary essay structure based on baseline assessment data.

Additional Finding

Quality Indicator:	1.2 Pedagogy	Rating:	Proficient
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Findings

Teachers provide multiple entry points and questioning strategies during instruction. In addition, students are engaged in creating meaningful work products and discussions.

Impact

The consistent use of high-level questions and student-to-student discussions results in students demonstrating higher-order thinking in work products and in discussions reflecting high levels of thinking and participation.

Supporting Evidence

- Teachers use questioning techniques to engage students in discussion. In a grade-eight ELA class the teacher asked students, "What are some character traits or adjectives you can use to describe characters in the novel, *Out of My Mind?*" One student stated, "Impatient is an adjective that describes her character because she couldn't wait." Another student stated that they agreed and added intelligence, stating, "She showed intelligence because when she was taking the test she did well." When asked by the teacher what the story was about, a student stated, "The story shows how a disabled person can function in society."
- Students demonstrated higher-order thinking skills in a geometry class. Students were engaged in a finding the surface area of a pyramid. Students were overheard in various discussions. A student stated, "The faces have the same area. That means they are congruent." A student followed up by stating, "I agree, and we can use a net to find the area of the faces." Students were also discussing the difference between triangular faces of square pyramids and triangle pyramids using comparing and strategic thinking from Webb's *Depth of Knowledge* level three.
- A grade eight social studies class reflected student engagement that tied into real-world connections. The teacher asked the students what the role of technology was in our lives and if it helps or hurts us. Students discussed both questions with their peers and shared out with the class. Discussions included, "people can overdose on medication but now you can look up information on the Internet about the type of medicine you're taking." Another student stated that cyber bullying was an example of how technology can hurt. A student stated, "I agree and I would like to add on that there are a lot of predators on the Internet." The teacher then directed the discussion toward technology and its impact on World War I. Students discussed how technology helped war efforts but also hurt because technology was used to win the war by increased the killing.

Additional Finding

Quality Indicator:	3.4 High Expectations	Rating:	Proficient
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Findings

School leaders articulate high expectations to the staff on a consistent basis in areas of instruction. School leaders also communicate with families pertaining to college and career readiness.

Impact

Teachers understand expectations around teaching and learning and there is a system of accountability for those expectations. Communication from school leaders and provides frequent opportunities for families to understand student progress towards meeting standards.

Supporting Evidence

- The principal communicates high expectations to staff through the staff handbook. The distribution of the staff handbook was preceded by a two-day PD session during which teachers gave feedback about the handbook. The final version was approved by the union representative. Sections of the handbook are referenced in the school weekly newsletter, *Week at a Glance (WAAG)*. High expectations documented in the handbook include that teachers must engage students in understanding informational text to improve reading and writing in all genres. The handbook also lists ten school-wide expectations including data driven instruction, staff modeling excellent attendance for students, and creating a safe non-bullying environment. The March 27 issue of *WAGG* reiterates the instructional expectation that students be exposed to informational text to improve reading and writing skills across disciplines.
- The principal and staff communicate high expectations to all parents by announcing the Middle School Quality Initiative, (MSQI). The letter informs parents that all grade-nine students will be reading on or above grade level and be placed on a path to high school, college and careers. MSQI also will provide students with exposure to literacy across the content and expose children to different reading strategies. During a parent interview, parents have stated that they are excited about the initiative to help prepare their children academically for the next level. One parent stated, "The principal keeps us informed of all activities that are happening in the building." School leaders also reach out to parents by distributing a parent handbook to all parents that includes a discipline policy that all parents must sign.
- Instructional expectations are articulated through the Determination, Responsibility, Excellence, Accountability and Motivation (DREAM) initiative. Teachers are trained by administration to implement this initiative in every classroom. It is the expectation that every teacher use DREAM in the following way: *Determination*, students must take notes and raise their hands. *Responsibility*, students must be on time, and complete all assignments; *Motivation*, students should always ask questions; and *Volunteer* information to lend to class discussions.

Additional Finding

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

Teachers are engaged in inquiry-based meetings. Structures are in place to support distributive leadership.

Impact

Teacher inquiry meetings result in strengthening teachers' instructional practices. Teachers have a voice in leadership decisions that impact student learning.

Supporting Evidence

- A math department inquiry team meeting was observed. The agenda included looking at Master Connect data wonderings. The team also looked at pre- and post-unit assessments in grades six through seven. They noted that grade-six students showed a growth in mastery on rational numbers. Additional observations included that grade-eight students did well in their previous assessments, so they are reexamining module two. The team looked at grade-seven strategies for math that included the Questions, Terms, Information, Process, and solution (Qtips) strategy template to help students deconstruct word problems. The team walked away with looking at trends within the grade and hearing what teachers have done that was successful. The only negative was they felt that they did not have enough time to look at more student work.
- A grade-six ELA meeting agenda demonstrates student work review protocols. The team looked at student work. A review finding showed the following, "Student was able to sequence her thoughts, however she requires further guidance when it comes to connecting her idea to society." Next steps included reading and writing goals for the next unit. They include using text to find the theme and how it relates to the real world topics. One example was the student would read about the struggle of immigrants in other countries to get a high school diploma.
- Through distributive leadership, teachers have a voice in decision making in the school. Teachers articulated an example during a team meeting when they discussed that there was a need to incorporate independent reading across the curriculum. This was a teacher-level decision that is now being practiced school wide. An additional example was seen as teachers make decisions on PD agendas that include literacy, and anti-bullying. Teachers stated that the principal is willing to listen to any ideas that staff may have regarding instructional culture and structures that the school has in place.