

Quality Review Report

2016-2017

Blueprint Middle School

Junior High-Intermediate-Middle 08X562

**1111 Pugsley Ave.
Bronx
NY 10472**

Principal: Tyneka Harrington

**Dates of Review:
January 24, 2017 - January 25, 2017**

Lead Reviewer: Roxan Marks

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

Blueprint Middle 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	Area of Focus	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	Additional Finding	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	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	Area of Celebration	Well Developed
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	Proficient
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:	3.4 High Expectations	Rating:	Well Developed
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Findings

High expectations are communicated to the community and teachers play an integral role in providing training for peers aligned to Danielson *Framework for Teaching*. School staff partners with families and share progress towards college and career readiness goals.

Impact

There is a culture of mutual accountability for high expectations among faculty and families to support student success in school.

Supporting Evidence

- High expectations are shared with the community through the “Blueprint News” which contains information pertaining to interdisciplinary learning activities happening in classrooms, academic clinics, key personnel supporting students, best practices, and general school news. The staff handbook addresses expectations aligned with the school philosophy to prepare students for college and outlines procedures to achieve those expectations. Clear guidelines pertaining to administrative procedures, dismissal, grading, protocols, and attendance are outlined. Instructional expectations identified address elements which foster coherence including planning guidance, expectations for student notebooks, classroom environment and portfolio management.
- School leaders and teachers are vital in supporting the expectations of learning and take an active role in training peers, inter-visitations, and guidance with recording low inference notes to provide collegial feedback. The feedback reflection forms show next steps and teachers list strategies learned and the ones they plan to implement in their classroom. Additionally, the forms capture observation feedback which is used to design additional professional learning opportunities. To support classroom culture building, selected staff members are responsible for providing training on restorative justice to foster accountability, community safety, and competency development. The current cycle of professional development focuses on increasing student engagement, build teacher capacity, and foster independence among students. Review of professional learning plans show alignment to goals and revisiting of schoolwide expectations for learning.
- Through frequent observations and feedback, school leaders hold staff accountable while providing supports through training delivered by consultants, model teachers, mentoring and inter-visitations. Feedback to teachers is aligned to the Danielson *Framework for Teaching* and specific feedback across reports a focus was seen on using assessments in learning. School leaders use a tracking document to capture feedback throughout the years. For example, the feedback sheet for a teacher has a summary of all observation feedback related to specific components of the rubric. Leaders shared that this data tracks the growth in target areas and guides planning of professional learning.
- Partnership with parents is evident through the school website, newsletters, progress reports and workshops. Parents commented on the usefulness of blogs which shares information to families about classroom instruction, assignments, special school events, and expectations for learning. Parents stated that teachers share ways for them to help their children and some even volunteer to give students extra help during lunch time. Parents said that “workshops provide resources and strategies that help us learn.” Digital grade books, text messages, use of Tuesday parent time for individual conferences are some ways expectations and progress are shared. During the Principal’s Choice, at the town hall meeting, a musician/actor responded to questions from the student panel addressing motivation, obstacles, dreams, and other topics. Similar town hall meetings are held monthly where students moderate questions about careers, college, and other topics with professionals from various industries.

Area of Focus

Quality Indicator:	1.2 Pedagogy	Rating:	Proficient
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Findings

Teaching practices are aligned with core beliefs, Blueprint values, and the Danielson *Framework for Teaching*. Across most classrooms scaffolds, entry points, and questioning techniques consistently provide support for English Language Learners (ELL's) and students with disabilities, although limited extensions for those students exist.

Impact

Across classrooms teaching practices afford most students the ability to engage in challenging tasks and demonstrate higher-order thinking.

Supporting Evidence

- Beliefs about learning are centered on the *Habits of Mind* and exemplify collaboration, voice, rigorous instruction, social-emotional support, accuracy, persistence, and other beliefs outlined in the Blueprint core values. Instructional delivery focuses on values connected to emotional literacy and building on traits essential to college readiness. In an eighth-grade social studies lesson, students were in partnerships or triads researching immigration to America using laptops. Students used text evidence from primary and secondary sources, central ideas and point of view to develop their argument essay. Across rooms, group and partner work occurred, and students collaborated on tasks, engaged in turn and talks, and had access to tools and scaffolds.
- Instructional approaches observed in classes include the workshop model, accountable talk, problem solving activities, conferring, feedback, academic language and vocabulary, self-assessment, and metacognitive strategies. In a humanities class, the art teacher pushes in, to work with students on creating art centered on the theme of immigration. Students used evidence from research to create a sculpture. Turn and talk provided opportunities for dialogue with peers, however the teachers managed the discussions. In a math classroom, students were working in groups and partnerships to solve real world problems based on their understanding of part and whole relationships. A guided group worked with the teacher and engaged in a turn-and-talk while another group used fraction cards to determine which is larger. A group of students was using feedback to upgrade their work, visual supports through charts and calculators supported learning. In a grade six humanities classroom, students were revising and editing argument essays about wearing school uniforms and the benefits of chocolate milk. Differentiation was provided through leveled prompt cards, grouping, and leveled color-coded checklist that included visuals.
- In a grade seven humanities lesson, an English Language Arts (ELA) teacher and an English as a New Language (ENL) teacher worked together with various groups and pairs of students to help them evaluate evidence and support their analysis of specific claims from text. The classroom contained useful charts, dictionaries, and visual checklists for use by students as needed. The ENL teacher worked with a group of English Language Learners (ELLs) as they read leveled text to support their argument about sports injuries. The teacher conferred with a student while recording noticing's and next steps to guide future learning. Students used a visual checklist to identify a technique they would use to include additional details to improve their work. Additionally, students could explain their reasoning and rationale when adding details to support their writing. During most visits, technology was utilized, and visual and graphic support was evident, however extensions were not consistently seen in all classrooms.

Additional Finding

Quality Indicator:	1.1 Curriculum	Rating:	Proficient
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Findings

Staff has vertically aligned curricula with the Common Core Learning Standards by focusing on knowledge with other disciplines, text based answers, and academic vocabulary across contents. Teachers plan and modify academic tasks using student work and data.

Impact

The curricula is coherent, promotes thinking, and accessible to all learners including English language learners and students with disabilities.

Supporting Evidence

- Teacher's use a balanced literacy approach and follow units of study from Teachers' College Reading and Writing Project (TCRWP), Connect Mathematics Program (CMP3), Passport for social studies, and project based units in science. A vertical articulation chart outlines monthly unit topics, unit focus and highlights fiction and non-fiction to ensure a balance and vertical alignment. Staff reviewed the vertical skills identified on maps and added another mini-writing unit and modified a grade six persuasive unit. An argument unit was modified based on data that demonstrated students' insufficient ability to support claims by using a variety of evidence. Teachers modified the unit and added a persuasive feature to teach students the importance of using personal experiences and emotion to persuade others in their argumentative essay.
- Curricular documents focus on immersing students in making meaning of academic language through the development and use of common interdisciplinary vocabulary lists. Across classrooms, similar vocabulary words were seen on boards and in lesson plans. Subject area teachers agreed upon specific vocabulary list incorporating content and academic words. Students are immersed and exposed to these same words across subject areas. Teacher teams use assessment results that demonstrated some deficiencies in comparing and contrasting skills. To increase proficiency in this area, teachers created additional lessons and practice for students. They shared after they analyze assessment or look at student work with a rubric, they make modifications to units and lessons.
- Data and student work samples are reviewed by content and grade level teams with support from consultants to plan and adjust unit and lesson plans. Teachers use pre-assessment data to plan, create and modify tasks, adjust mentor texts thus promoting opportunities for cognitive engagement. Teacher plans include questions at varying levels designed to challenge thinking and support access. In a grade eight lesson plan, questions include, "Why do you think it was fair for people or companies to have monopolies? Do you think the immigrant processing centers were inhumane? Why or why not?" Scaffolds are planned with the goal of ultimate gradual release and developing independence. For example, math word walls were displayed in rooms including visual representation and definitions and charts and mentor text and tools are developed to help learners. In a grade six lesson plan, in the section for differentiation the teacher indicates using leveled prompt cards to provide multiple entry points for students and leveled groups based on running record levels. Another plan has accommodations such as providing supplemental visual aids to students and provide additional time. In a seventh-grade math plan, the station plans and tasks were tiered for the three groups and partnerships based on assessment data.

Additional Finding

Quality Indicator:	2.2 Assessment	Rating:	Proficient
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Findings

Teachers use and create rubrics, checklists and common assessments aligned to curricula and provide actionable feedback to students. Teachers across the school use various strategies to check for understanding, confer, and students self-assess and reflect on their work.

Impact

Students use feedback, conferences with teachers, and checklists to improve their work. Teachers adjust instructional delivery to meet the learning needs of their students.

Supporting Evidence

- The testing calendar outlines a comprehensive plan for review of assessment results in all core subject areas. Performance tasks, chapter assessments, and reading level exams are some assessments used. School leaders and teachers analyze New York state assessment results in English Language Arts and math to identify priority standards and plan for additional emphasis on those standards. Running record assessments are administered three times a year, additional reading benchmarks are administered based on individual student performance. For example, on demand test results were analyzed by teacher teams and used to determine reteaching points and strategic student groupings. Rubrics were seen on bulletin boards and in work folders, additionally they included teacher feedback and next steps.
- Teachers check for student understanding using exit tickets, circulating during small group work, listening to turn and talks, thumbs up, and conferencing. The exit ticket assigned in a math class, required students to record in their journal the most successful strategies they used when solving a word problem as the teacher circulated observing the written responses. In another grade six humanities class, the lesson plan reflected a turn and talk sharing two methods that students can apply to improve the essay. At the end of the observed lesson the teacher passed out exit tickets asking students about the goals they set and what techniques were used during the lesson to revise their writing. Teachers review assessments weekly during team meetings and use this information to adjust instruction. Teachers use exit tickets and data to plan reteach opportunities and make adjustment to pacing. In the team observation, teachers modified the small group plans and pacing calendar making on the spot adjustments to unit sequence and lesson plans based on the analysis of student work.
- Teachers shared that students use checklists to assess their work with peers, sharing glow and grow feedback. Another teacher remarked that listening to book club discussions provides information which informs instructional decisions. In a humanities lesson, the ENL teacher conferred with a group of students using a conference note form to record responses and identify specific teaching points to support students. Teachers also use data to create after-school intervention groups. Work products seen in folders and bulletin boards were scored with rubrics and feedback included a compliment and next steps. One student shared that they confer with teachers and “the rubrics and feedback helps me improve my essays.” Another student shared that sometimes they “swap work and give feedback to our classmates.”

Additional Finding

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

Content teachers meet within and across grades to analyze data and student work. Teachers take on leadership roles by managing projects and have input in decisions.

Impact

The work of teacher teams supports improved student learning, aligns with school goals, and promotes voice in decisions.

Supporting Evidence

- The work of teacher teams is reflected in the mission statement and *Blueprint Manifesto* displayed in the hallway. Teams meet weekly by grade and content level configurations and monthly during two professional learning sessions. The team coordinator is responsible for recording the contents of meetings and uploading the shared folder to the intranet. Consultancy teachers work across grades and subjects to support peers with ENL strategies and techniques to provide access for students. One teacher of ELL's commented that articulation and conferring with colleagues has helped them implement effective strategies for second language learners. The culture team consists of guidance counselors, social workers, deans, and school leaders who meet weekly to address social-emotional learning and monitor specific activities. This team supports at risk students with prevention and interventions strategies and provide professional development across the school.
- Teams use common protocols to guide their meetings. During the team observation, teachers reviewed pre-assessment data from the unit focusing on argumentative skills. Teachers reviewed five samples of argumentative writing from ELLs, students with disabilities, and general education students. Teachers examined the work for evidence of claims and used sticky notes to document noticing's. Teachers discussed their observations and future implications for instruction. They used a planning for small group document and the grade eight pacing calendar to make changes. They agree to include a debate that will provide opportunity for students to orally discuss their evidence and extend the time allocated for the research component of the unit. Teachers shared that teams work together like a family and adjustments in curricula and pedagogy are made based on various data sources including students.
- Distributive structures are embedded in practices across the school. Model teachers serve as mentors for new teachers and teachers of ELL's confer and support peers with implementing effective strategies. Teachers shared that a colleague led the professional learning sessions for parents and teachers on using principles of *Growth Mindset*. A team is responsible for working with students on the monthly Town Hall event intended to promote college and career readiness. Team leaders meet regularly with school leaders and decisions are collaborative and teachers have input in planning professional learning. Cross curricula collaboration and sharing with between art and English teachers integrates the arts across other subject areas.

Additional Finding

Quality Indicator:	4.1 Teacher Support and Supervision	Rating:	Proficient
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Findings

School leaders provide teachers feedback with next steps aligned to Danielson *Framework for Teaching*. Partnerships with consultants, feedback from teachers, reflection, and observation data drive planning of professional development.

Impact

Clear expectations are communicated and pedagogical supports are provided to promote professional growth.

Supporting Evidence

- Teacher's receive rubric aligned focused feedback and next steps from observations of their instructional delivery. School leaders use a spreadsheet system to record the next steps from all observations and use this information to inform decisions that promote professional growth. A school wide focus is to increase data-based instructional decision-making including alignment of teaching point based on data, creating data based groups and using assessment in instruction. Review of *Advance* reports show that teacher feedback was tailored to assessments for learning and aligned to school goals. For example, next steps written in observation reports focus on assessments, such as "include students in creating a rubric", "use a checklist", and "ensure students are aware of the assessment criteria by providing a rubric". The alignment of work between teachers and consultants is based on the major takeaway from the summary reports.
- School leader's shared that observational data is reviewed often and used to identify areas in need to development which are aligned with professional development plans. Teachers meet with school leadership to develop goals and collaboratively review annual *Advance* summary reports, student data, and the prior year strengths and areas for growth. Feedback sessions include reference to the Danielson *Framework for Teaching* rubric as well as provide resources to support teacher development. Additionally, teachers are encouraged to participate in inter-visitations to share best practices and improve pedagogy. Mentor teachers provide feedback to support new teachers and work their understanding of the Danielson *Framework for Teaching* framework.
- Coaches and administrators use observation data to align their support for teacher development. Based on the prior observation data, professional development is concentrated on improving more explicit engagement, mindset, assessments, and emotional intelligence, thus leading to improved student learning. Teacher's collaboration with literacy, math and social emotional learning consultants support their growth. They indicated that the work with Restorative Circles professional development partner has impacted their classroom culture and also improved the culture on their teams.