NYC Department of Education
Chancellor Richard A. Carranza

Quality Review Report

2018-2019

Comprehensive Model School Project M.S. 327

Secondary School 09X327

1501 Jerome Avenue
Bronx
NY 10452

Principal: Alixandre Ricci

Dates of Review:
March 19, 2019 - March 20, 2019

Lead Reviewer: Jorge Estrella

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

Comprehensive Model School Project M.S. 327 serves students in grade 6 through grade 12. 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		
To what extent does the school...	**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	**Additional Finding**	**Proficient**

School Quality Ratings continued

School Culture

To what extent does the school...	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	**Additional Finding**	**Well Developed**

Systems for Improvement

To what extent does the school...	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	**Area of Celebration**	**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**	**Well Developed**
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	**Area of Focus**	**Proficient**

Area of Celebration

Quality Indicator:	1.3 Leveraging Resources	Rating:	Well Developed

Findings

School leaders ensure that the use of resources, including teacher and student assignments, provides intentionally targeted supports for all students including English Language Learners (ELLs) and students with disabilities to meet the school's goals and the instructional focus.

Impact

The school's strategic hiring, purposeful programming of students and teachers, extended day programs, and productive partnerships result in a systematic allocation of resources that meets students' learning needs in a targeted manner evidenced by meaningful work products.

Supporting Evidence

- School leaders strategically target all resources toward improving student achievement and meeting schoolwide goals which align to the school's instructional focus on differentiation through ongoing formative and summative assessment in an effort to reach all learners. Most of the budgetary resources are allocated for personnel and technology to provide additional pedagogical support in the school to support the academic and social-emotional needs of the students. In an Integrated Collaborative Teaching (ICT) algebra class, a group of students worked on factoring quadratic expressions using an online math platform. In English Language Arts (ELA), during the Response to Intervention (RTI) period, students used an online web-based platform for reading and individualized academic vocabulary practice. Students have access to a digital library that includes prose and graphic novels as well as read-alouds for students. In a marketing class, all students used laptops to engage in online research to identify a well-defined target market for a product of choice. As a result, 34 percent of ELLs who took the New York State English as a Second Language Achievement Test advanced one or more proficiency levels, 21.4 percent of students tested out during the 2017-2018 school year.

- School leaders leverage vital partnerships to support all learners and teachers, such as the on-site community-based organization that offers students access to various academic and enrichment activities, college advising for high school, as well as funding and chaperones for college trips. This partnership also provides a safe place for students after school and on Saturdays. Other long-term partnerships with Teachers College and Hunter College include student teaching placement at the school, reducing the student-adult ratio in classrooms while nurturing potential candidates for teaching positions. The Training Opportunities Program (TOP), provides economic and strategic support for students with disabilities to gain paid work experiences while in school. As a result, comparing 2017 with the 2018 English Regents scores, students with disabilities reflect gains from an average of 54 percent to 58 percent, which is higher than the borough results.

- The hiring process involves school leaders, teachers, and students. Candidates are invited to participate in interviews and demo-lessons. Selected participants from the student teaching program, are invited to be part of the pool of candidates. The school participation in New York City Department of Education initiative Progressive Redesign Opportunity School for Excellence facilitates the design of a nine-period schedule, allowing a daily RTI period for all students. During these sessions, students focus on literacy skill work, independent reading, or book clubs. Based on monthly assessments, students' placement is determined and targeted interventions are provided to address the instructional needs. Students' schedules also reflect a double math period every day. Furthermore, the afterschool and Saturday programs serve students who need additional support to be on track for graduation or language acquisition supports for ELLs. As a result, *iReady* assessments reflect that reading proficiency grew from 38 percent to 49 percent since Fall 2018 and math proficiency grew from 65 percent to 76 percent since Fall 2018.

Area of Focus

Quality Indicator:	5.1 Monitoring and Revising Systems	Rating:	Proficient

Findings

School leaders have a process in place to regularly evaluate and adjust curricula, pedagogy, and assessment practices, in response to student learning needs. School leaders and teachers also have a process in place to review the quality of teacher teamwork and professional development practices.

Impact

School leaders and staff have made the needed adjustments to systems and practices related to the Common Core Learning Standards to guide curriculum and instruction as well as expectations for teacher collaborative work, however feedback protocols are being refined prior to implementation of units to further build alignment between what is taught and how it is taught. Formal structures to assess adjustments in order to promote coherence across the school and the use of online tracking systems to monitor students' progress towards graduation are in place.

Supporting Evidence

- School leaders reported that content area teams meet during the summer to evaluate and adapt curriculum unit maps and co-plan utilizing assessment and demographic data from the previous year. School leaders review the effectiveness of curricular materials, assessment tools, and teaching practices based on student outcomes and the integration of the instructional focus in lessons. School leaders monitor the use of assessments to differentiate instruction via observations. Teachers also adjust curriculum based on summative and formative assessments throughout the year. As a result of those practices, the school has designed monthly cycles of daily RTI sessions for middle school students and once students show mastery of specific standards, they are moved to different tiered sections. Students have a double math period every day so that teachers can deepen concepts, skills, and strategies. Yet, during the meeting with school leaders and a review of school documents it became evident that the school is refining the protocols to provide feedback to teachers around their units of study before implementation.

- School leaders created structures to support teaching practice and opportunities to evaluate instruction via ongoing feedback from cycles of frequent classroom observations, coaching visits, walkthroughs, and peer observation cycles. School leaders designed and use a tracking system to monitor outcomes of these different observations and next steps to have an ongoing pulse of progress. Then, they collaborate with teachers in the design of coaching cycles and support them in making instructional modifications. Furthermore, school leaders meet with coaches and grade level leaders team to review the adjustments and ensure coherence in instructional practices to meet student learning needs. The outcomes, trends and action plans are used to drive the agenda of grade level teams. However, this focus is only for ELA and math, and not yet extended to other content areas.

- School leaders ensure that all teachers are involved in weekly team meetings and professional development and have been effective in refining their capacity for improvement by supporting the work of collaborative teacher teams both horizontally and vertically. These teams routinely engage in analyzing student work using the New Teacher Center protocols for looking at student work and analyzing data which are used to inform curricula and instructional adjustments in response to student learning needs. Furthermore, school leaders developed and implemented a tracking system to monitor such data points as students missing credits to graduate. Although school leaders articulate processes to evaluate the school's instructional and organizational practices, some of the interactions with teacher teams have not been memorialized or recorded consistently. As a result, in some cases revisions to curriculum and teacher practice were not done in a timely fashion.

Quality Indicator:	**1.1 Curriculum**	**Rating:**	**Proficient**

Findings

School leaders and teachers have developed curricula aligned to the Common Core Learning Standards and have also integrated the instructional shifts, offering learning experiences where higher order skills are consistently emphasized for all students.

Impact

The school's curricular decisions are purposeful to build coherence incorporating specific literacy strategies into instructional planning documents. Instructional planning documents emphasize rigorous habits and promote college and career readiness for all students.

Supporting Evidence

- School leaders and teachers align curricula to the Common Core Learning Standards with content standards in units of study and lessons across grades and subject areas to promote college and career readiness. For instance, a geography unit of study incorporates Common Core skills for reading and writing by drawing evidence from informational texts to support analysis, reflection, and research regarding "How did the geography of the Americas influence the development of civilizations?" Then, students are asked to recognize and analyze how place and region influence the social, cultural, and economic characteristics of civilizations. Decisions to build coherence are evident in the aligned unit plans. For example, from grade six to twelve, ELA lessons aligned scope and sequence and terminology to prevent re-teaching of the same concepts and developed cross-curricular ideas that include skills, grammar, original notes, and anchor charts. ELA units of study in all grades include literacy strategies such as TEXAS: T-Topic Sentence; E-Evidence; X-Explanation; A-Analysis; S-Sum-up, ADDS: A-Answer; D-Detail 1; D-Detail 2; S-Sum up, and Thinking Jobs, a strategy to help students to understand and analyze complex text. In different math classes, teachers incorporated the use of a problem of the day as well as tasks with real-world connections.

- The review of instructional planning documents revealed that there is a focus on tasks that require the regular use of text-based responses in all content areas, academic vocabulary, close reading, and annotation of texts to support writing activities, with an emphasis on fluency and application in math, in alignment to instructional shifts and applicable state standards. For example, an Advanced Placement literature unit of a study showed that after reading *Story of a Good Country People*, students will be asked to write an essay using textual evidence discussing how a character in the story freed herself from the powers of others or looked to gain power over others. In a seventh grade ELA lesson plan, students will be grouped in differentiated groups reading a text using collaborative annotation strategies. Reviewed math instructional planning documents include annotation activities to identify keywords as well as an emphasis on academic vocabulary. These practices promote coherence of curricula across disciplines and foster college and career readiness for all students.

- Teacher teams work collaboratively to promote a high level of rigor to emphasize higher-order skills across grades and content areas for all learners, including ELLs and students with disabilities. In a sixth-grade self-contained social studies lesson plan on inferring how a change in leadership may lead to the fall of the empire students will be asked to discuss what may have caused the leadership style to change in response to text that had been modified to support students' current reading level. A Spanish unit of study, includes an essential question "What ideas or factors influence our decisions for a choice of profession and education?" requiring students to analyze and identify abilities and characteristics needed in a variety of career options and relate them to their skills.

Additional Finding

Quality Indicator:	1.2 Pedagogy	Rating:	Proficient

Findings

Pedagogical practices reflect teachers' consistent implementation of multiple entry points into the curricula and the promotion of discussion through the use of the Socratic seminar, collaborative annotation activities, and an assignment of a "Discussion Initiator."

Impact

All learners, including ELLs and students with disabilities, are engaged in appropriately challenging tasks, discussions, and work products that reflect higher-order thinking and cognitive engagement.

Supporting Evidence

- Across classrooms, most teachers confer with students one-on-one or in a small group setting and monitor each student's level of understanding and participation. This pedagogical approach allows teachers to differentiate instruction for each student and was evident in a ninth grade ICT Algebra class. Teachers created differentiated supports to help students in factoring quadratic equations. Some students were supported through the use of a vocabulary box and math glossary. Group one focused on factoring methods of greatest common fact and difference of two squares; this included a vocabulary box and math glossary. Group two focused on the factoring methods of greatest common factor, trinomial, and difference of two squares; this included a vocabulary box, math glossary, and written responses with sentence stems from answering the written prompt of when to use each of the three methods. Group three focused on all factoring methods and worked on more complex problems and provide a written response on "How can we determine a solution method for factoring a quadratic equation?" Thus, most students observed were engaged in higher-order thinking activities through their interactions with peers and teachers.

- Multiple entry points to learning were evident across classrooms. In a seventh grade ELA lesson about using ADDS to answer short responses, students worked in small groups of five where one of the students acted as a facilitator to guide their peers in using the ADDS and Thinking Jobs strategies. Students had opportunities to select and read an article from three different articles; then students answered the short response question. ELLs were paired with peers with bilingual abilities; students were provided with sentence starters, a resource ring with different anchor charts and differentiated ADDS paragraph. In a math class, a group of students was observed using an online math platform to solve equations. In an Earth Science lesson, students were watching locally-based video clips about earth formation. Then, students were tasked to work in heterogeneous groups to create a geologic timeline using manipulatives. As a result of these supports, students consistently engage in challenging tasks and demonstrate high levels of thinking.

- Teachers provide opportunities to students to build critical thinking, participation, and high-level work products, as well as engage in rigorous tasks individually, in small groups or partnership. In an eighth grade ELA class students were engaged in a Socratic seminar activity about the book they read *I am J*, which is about the story of a teenager that struggles against the social definition of gender. In their interactions, students demonstrated the use of higher-order thinking skills by having high-level conversations and using accountable talk stems. In the seventh grade ELA class, students were engaged in collaborative annotation activities, using chart paper which were posted on the wall and a gallery walk followed. The structure of group work includes a "Discussion Initiator" who helps facilitate productive discussions. Students were observed using textual evidence from the article to support their claims and students managed their conversations.

Quality Indicator:	**2.2 Assessment**	**Rating:**	**Proficient**

Findings

Across classrooms, teachers use assessments, rubrics, and grading policies that are aligned with curricula. Also, teachers' assessment practices consistently reflect the use of targeted questions as ongoing checks for understanding and student self-assessment.

Impact

Assessment practices provide actionable feedback regarding student progress. The use of multiple approaches for ongoing checks for understanding results in effective on-the-spot instructional adjustments during lessons to meet the instructional needs of all learners.

Supporting Evidence

- School leaders and teachers reported that they use a schoolwide grading policy and task-specific rubrics aligned to the Common Core. During the meeting with students, they reported that the rubrics in all subjects guide completion of tasks during class, and on essays, projects, and homework and that rubrics provided them with valuable information on their performance and next steps to improve their work. Students shared that teachers provide them with feedback in several forms including verbal, written, and online. For example, some feedback reads: "Great essay! Your analysis is very strong. Next step is to work on transitions between paragraphs." Expand on counterclaim before going into your rebuttal." Or, "Great Job on your project. Enjoyed the journal entries of a factory worker and the technical research on companies." One student indicated that although she got an A on her essay, she still received feedback from the teacher to make it even better. Also, students reported that when they need clarity on next steps, teachers are always available to go over their work or their grades during lunchtime or after school. Thus, this form of assessment provides ongoing and valuable feedback to teachers and students regarding levels of student achievement.

- The observed practice of checks for understanding evidenced that teachers used several approaches such as; conferring, targeted questions, colored cards called traffic lights, conference notes, exit slips, and group assessments to make on-the-spot adjustments to lessons to meet the individual and instructional needs of students. For example, as teachers confer with students, they pushed students' thinking or directed them to look at the resources available in the classrooms such as anchor charts or connecting with peers. Also, in most classes students have to indicate their level of understanding by using the colored cards. In a sixth-grade math class, while students were working in groups going over solving equations and inequalities, the teacher confers with each group and individual students using targeted questions to promote higher-order thinking and the use of prior knowledge. The teacher recorded responses on a formative assessment tool. After a first round, the teacher halts the class and redirected students to look at their notes and process charts, as well as checking with their peers.

- In most lessons observed during classroom visits, students were engaged in a variety of self-assessment activities such as student facing checklists, anchor charts, TEXAS, ADDS strategies, peer assessments, and rubrics that equip them to monitor their understanding and information of their next steps. In a review of student work products, one student wrote: "I need improvement on making strong claims and use details from the book." Students also engage in self-reflection as noted by one student, "Something I did well was the conclusion because it included the two topics that I was writing about clearly. As a result, I got a score of three in this part of my essay. In other parts, I got two. Something I can use in the future is sticking to the rubric, so I can make sure I have all the parts that I need to ensure a higher grade." As a result of engaging students in self-assessment activities, students have a clear understanding of how their work is scored and how to improve.

Additional Finding

Quality Indicator:	4.2 Teacher Teams and Leadership Development	Rating:	Well Developed

Findings

All teachers engage in inquiry-based professional collaboration that promotes shared leadership and the refinement of pedagogy that supports the implementation of Common Core, leading to improvements in teacher practice and student learning. School leaders promote distributive leadership structures that are rooted in the team and school level.

Impact

Teachers' active participation in structured teacher team sessions, and in schoolwide initiatives, increase teachers' leadership skills, thus increasing teacher participation in inquiry work to improve student learning across the school.

Supporting Evidence

- All teachers are engaged in inquiry-based structured professional collaborations that have strengthened teacher instructional capacity. There are horizontal and vertical teacher teams, as well as a dedicated data-inquiry team. One of the priorities of these teams has been to implement Advanced Literacy to help all students develop literacy skills. Content area teams examine data sets and revise curricula for vertical alignment, and instructional shifts. This team initially meets during the summer to evaluate and adapt curriculum unit maps and co-plan utilizing assessment and demographic data from the previous year. The data-inquiry team reviews key state and city data sets and disaggregates it to find actionable trends. The school Implementation Team meets twice monthly to discuss upcoming initial evaluations and reevaluations for special education services, behavior intervention, incident data, tier II & tier III behavioral, and transitional supports. As a result of productive collaborative structures, there is a welcoming and collegial environment that strengthens school-wide instructional coherence, implementation of the Common Core, and achievement for all learners as reflected in the 2018 four-year graduation rate of 87 percent which is higher than the city by 11 percent.

- As part of the structures for collaboration, teachers observe one another through peer observation cycles sharing their findings during the Peer Observation Team, where teachers examine pedagogical data and classroom data to target strategies for future peer observation cycles. A review of the peer observation tracking system reveals that although most teachers are using differentiated strategies to support the needs of all students, there are still some instances where teachers are yet to provide a closure at the end of the lesson or include an assessment to evaluate student understanding. Teachers shared that the low-inference feedback received from peers, and having the opportunity to observe their colleagues sharing best practices with students they share in some cases, has been essential to improving their practice, and design tasks that promote higher-order thinking leading to improved student achievement.

- School leaders embed distributive leadership opportunities in the day-to-day operations where teachers have opportunities to make critical decisions about school improvement. Teachers are serving as grade team leaders, department leaders, coaches, and mentors. Teachers play a key role in facilitating professional development sessions, use their classrooms as lab sites, design curricula and provide feedback to colleagues on lesson plans. Teachers shared, and school leaders agreed that teachers' voice is critical in the hiring process. Teachers designed and led schoolwide instructional activities such as the well-designed RTI program, as well as implementing the TOP program which targets students taking different pathways to graduation. School leaders shared that teachers developed instructional initiatives such as the use of instructional strategies such as collaborative annotation activities, specific roles in students' group work, ADDS, and literacy strategies such as TEXAS, and Thinking Jobs. This distributed leadership approach has resulted in schoolwide actions that promote student achievement.