



Quality Review Report

2014-2015

Rocco Laurie

Middle School R072

**33 Ferndale Avenue
Staten Island
NY 10314**

Principal: Peter Macellari

**Date of review: May 13, 2015
Lead Reviewer: Kristine Mustillo**

The School Context

Rocco Laurie is an intermediate school with 1278 students from grade 6 through grade 8. The school population comprises 6% Black, 25% Hispanic, 47% White, and 21% Asian students. The student body includes 5% English language learners and 20% special education students. Boys account for 51% of the students enrolled and girls account for 49%. The average attendance rate for the school year 2013-2014 was 93.0%.

School Quality Criteria

Instructional Core		
<i>To what extent does the school...</i>	Area of:	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 Findings	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	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 Findings	Proficient
School Culture		
<i>To what extent does the school...</i>	Area of:	Rating:
3.4 Establish a culture for learning that communicates high expectations to staff, students, and families, and provide supports to achieve those expectations	Additional Findings	Well Developed
Systems for Improvement		
<i>To what extent does the school...</i>	Area of:	Rating:
4.2 Engage in structured professional collaborations on teams using an inquiry approach that promotes shared leadership and focuses on improved student learning.	Celebration	Well Developed

Area of Celebration

Quality Indicator:	4.2 Teacher teams and leadership development	Rating:	Well Developed
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Findings

Teacher teams regularly analyze assessment data and student work products. They engage in inquiry through collaborative forums focused on student progress and instructional improvement.

Impact

The work of teacher teams results in the adoption of effective engagement practices resulting in improved teacher capacity. These collaborations increase student progress and mastery of goals for groups of students they share.

Supporting Evidence

- Multiple teacher teams focus on the progress of students with disabilities. Teacher teams focused on students in the ASD NEST program meet weekly to review student work and determine progress toward individual goals, both academic and behavioral. For students who take the New York State Alternate Assessment (NYSAA) teachers implemented Unique, News 2 You and Dimensions U to provide students leveled support in math and humanities. The most recent data indicate that 97% of students in these targeted subgroups are on track to pass math. In ELA targeted students saw an average of a 60 point increase from the baseline to the mid-year benchmark. In addition, the work around learning styles and differentiation is expanding beyond the special education classrooms and being adopted by teachers across grades and content areas.
- Teacher teams meet weekly by content and by grade level as needed. The school shifted the lead from these meetings from assistant principal and coach facilitation to teacher led collaborations. Focusing on student engagement this year teachers have begun implementing the use of learning menus to address the different learning styles of students. In addition, the use of Socratic seminar has been increased.
- Results from the 2013 Earth Science regents, where the average score was 74% was analyzed by the science team. This led to the teachers modifying instruction and strengthening lab manuals. The positive effect of this adjustment led to an increase in the average score to 80% on the 2014 Earth Science regents and an increased passing rate.

Area of Focus

Quality Indicator:

1.2 Pedagogy

Rating:

Proficient

Findings

Across classrooms teaching practices are aligned to the belief that students learn best when they are engaged in discussion and interactive tasks.

Impact

While teachers have increased practices to support student engagement, they are not yet consistently and strategically designed to extend student thinking and increase student ownership.

Supporting Evidence

- In English language arts students engage in Socratic seminar using evidence collected and questions formed across a selected text to discuss big ideas and related themes. A 7th grade class discussed “things always go the way we plan” and “characters’ actions reveal their thoughts and feelings” grounded in the book *Wanted*. Another 7th grade class participated in a similar process utilizing information from literary and non-fiction text selections based on human and animal relationships.
- In social studies classrooms we saw students explore topics including feudalism and American history focusing largely on causal relationships using evidence from multiple sources. Across classrooms we saw choice boards being implemented allowing students to engage with content and different activities based on learning styles; however the choices did not always reinforce or deepen student understanding of the content leading to mastery.
- In math classrooms students engage in station activities to explore word problems and multi-step computation problems relating to area, polynomials, statistics and variability. Stations give students the opportunity to explore content in multiple ways at varying levels of rigor but are not yet consistently and strategically designed to allow for student ownership of learning through project selection and application to real world projects.
- Across science classrooms students were exposed to grade level content however, the level of rigor and strategy of task design did not always push students beyond their level. In a self-contained science class, students examined trays that contained soil, leaves, twigs and a variety of other natural elements to explore the concept of biotic and abiotic elements. Students in groups of four received four different exit tasks. One of the four tasks asked students to compare and contrast biotic and abiotic elements. While students could list multiple contrasts for living and non-living things, students did not explore comparisons beyond location, nor were they expected to provide a response that pushed their thinking to a higher level. In another science class, students placed elements of the periodic table in their correct place using an interactive white board. Students had their texts open to the periodic table. It was unclear how this activity promoted extended student thinking.

Additional Findings

Quality Indicator:	1.1 Curriculum	Rating:	Proficient
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Findings

School leaders and faculty align all curricula to Common Core Learning Standards. Curricula, including the instructional shifts provide rigorous tasks that require higher order thinking skills across grades and subjects.

Impact

Units of study reflect objectives that integrate the instructional shifts and promote skills associated with college and career readiness for all learners resulting in increased levels of student performance.

Supporting Evidence

- In English Language Arts, teachers created six units of study that include a writing task with a task specific rubric aligned to the Common Core Learning Standards. There is a consistent emphasis on using text evidence and dialogues to support big ideas, understand theme and answer essential questions.
- In math, teachers use Engage NY modules and select math programs to design a curriculum that supports students in accessing the instructional shifts. Increasingly, unit plans in mathematics reflect designs that support computation as well application to real world situations and exploration of multi-step problems through collaborative learning experiences. The school offers advanced courses, including regents, in mathematics, as well as science,
- All learners are supported in accessing grade level content and planning is addressing multiple learning styles. Across unit plans, grade level expectations are standard for all students with attention to scaffolds and resources to support access. For example, across units of study there learning menus allow students to explore content through visuals, texts, online research, and through shared discussions with their peers.
- The school conducts a *Careers in Our Future* unit with 7th graders and hosts Career Day, giving students the opportunity to explore career options and related steps to achieving goals. Students create projects based on careers they wish to explore. For example, a student interested in pursuing a career as a lawyer would research the education requirements, job responsibilities, work hours, life style, advantages and disadvantages of choosing this path. Students create presentation boards and present their findings to their peers.
- Social Studies Units are in the process of being uploaded into the Skedula site to more effectively share unit revisions to ensure coherence across the humanities curriculum.

Quality Indicator:	2.2 Assessment	Rating:	Proficient
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Findings

Across classrooms rubrics and common assessments aligned to the schools curricula are used to determine student progress and inform instruction.

Impact

The analysis of common assessments results in actionable feedback to students and teachers regarding achievement. Adjustments to curricula and instructional practices are made as a result of the data received from teacher and school assessments.

Supporting Evidence

- Teachers utilize social studies assessments to examine student misunderstandings of content –concepts taught. Utilizing pre and post exams results in teachers planning weekly “skills days” where they provide small group instruction based on these assessment results.
- Based on language arts performance tasks, teachers across grades noticed students struggling with the work related to theme. Teachers incorporated additional work in this area looking at different ways to examine the relationship among theme, textual evidence and text-based dialogue. Teachers collaborated on accessing additional resources to support this skill, including web- based practice.
- Teachers utilize a protocol for looking at student work that includes looking at the expectations for the task, what the student was able to demonstrate and next instructional steps. Rubrics guide this process and are utilized to communicate task expectations as well as provide feedback and specific next learning steps.

Quality Indicator:	3.4 High Expectations	Rating:	Well Developed
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Findings

The school consistently conveys high expectations to the entire staff through the establishment of professional learning opportunities aligned to the Danielson Framework for Teaching. The school conveys high expectations for students through ongoing advisement and the provision of advanced learning opportunities.

Impact

School staff partner with students to provide access to rigorous instruction and secondary readiness opportunities. Ongoing advisory supports students in developing goals and partners with them in decision making that enables students to make informed decisions.

Supporting Evidence

- High expectations are communicated to staff using the Danielson Framework for Teaching and Common Core Learning Standards as instructional expectations. Collaborative forums for planning and professional learning ensure consistent communication and support aligned to expectations. Based on teacher feedback, observations and inter-visitations, professional learning choices are developed and designed for individuals and groups of teachers. Professional learning includes reflection opportunities linked to improvement in teacher practice and/or improvements in student performance.
- The school offers students multiple opportunities to participate in advanced placement courses, regent preparation courses and programs that support students in preparing to apply to specialized high schools. In addition, there are after-school programs and Saturday programs that support struggling learners and provide enrichment opportunities in sports and the arts. Ongoing written communication and advisement make students aware of the academic and behavioral expectations associated with participation and achievement. Pupil Path gives all students the ability to monitor their progress on tasks and exams, their completion of assignments and their attendance.
- Counselors and teachers work together to support students in special education classes meet academic and behavioral expectations by providing ongoing support in social skills and expanding differentiation options to address the needs of a diverse population of learners. For example, teachers in the ASD program work on supporting students developing conversational skills such as turn taking and acknowledgment. All students are supported in developing organizational skills and habits of perseverance.