



Quality Review Report

2015-2016

I.S. 238 - Susan B. Anthony Academy

Middle School Q238

**88-15 182 Street
Queens
NY 11423**

Principal: Peter Leddy

**Date of review: February 23, 2016
Lead Reviewer: Deborah Burnett-Worthy**

The School Context

I.S. 238 - Susan B. Anthony Academy is a middle school with 1,501 students from grade 6 through grade 8. In 2015-2016, the school population comprises 27% Asian, 39% Black, 28% Hispanic, and 2% White students. The student body includes 15% English Language Learners and 15% students with disabilities. Boys account for 50% of the students enrolled and girls account for 50%. The average attendance rate for the school year 2014-2015 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 <i>Framework for Teaching</i> , aligned to the curricula, engaging, and meets the needs of all learners so that all students produce meaningful work products	Focus	Developing
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	Developing
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	Celebration	Proficient
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	Additional Findings	Proficient

Area of Celebration

Quality Indicator:	3.4 High Expectations	Rating:	Proficient
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Findings

Structures and systems are in place to consistently communicate high expectations to staff and provide training. School leaders and staff consistently provide ongoing feedback to families around expectations supporting student progress towards college and career readiness.

Impact

Staff training supports schoolwide systems of accountability and leads to teaching and learning that meet the expectations communicated throughout the school. Families understand student progress toward those expectations.

Supporting Evidence

- School leaders communicate and support high expectations to staff members by discussing expected alignment of instructional practice to the Danielson *Framework for Teaching* at staff meetings. Leadership also provides the following training supports for teachers: learning walks, lunch and learns, professional development, and a series of workshops that promote the instructional skills that aim to prepare students to be successful at the next level of education and in their careers. The workshop topics include: Socratic seminars, Google Classroom, strategies for teaching English as a New Language (ENL) classes, engaging twenty-first century learners, and unpacking math strategies. Each department meets on Mondays to collaborate professionally. This also gives school leaders the opportunity to check for accountability and ensure teachers are implementing the instructional practices in which they have been trained.
- Team meetings, professional development workshops, curriculum planning sessions, and the school newsletter are utilized by school leaders to communicate the expectations for instruction and college and career readiness skills. Writing across the content area, with particular attention to the Common Core Learning Standards-aligned skill of supporting ideas with text-based evidence, is one of the communicated expectations.
- The importance of developing the college readiness skill of giving effective presentations has been successfully communicated to parents. Parents spoke about how important they believe it is for their children to complete the digital projects that are mandated across grade and content areas and how these projects prepare their children for the next academic level. One parent commented, "I know my child will have to do digital presentations in college. She is getting ready for that now." Another parent stated, "I am pleased my child is getting challenging work in this school." Parents were also able to speak to the significance of writing skills, study skills, and being up to date with their child's progress towards graduation and college. As a result of parent workshops addressing these issues, nearly 50% of all teachers have conferences scheduled for parent engagement sessions every Tuesday.

Area of Focus

Quality Indicator:	1.2 Pedagogy	Rating:	Developing
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Findings

Teacher practices are becoming aligned to the curricula and are beginning to reflect a set of beliefs about how students learn best.

Impact

Teacher practice and classroom discussions are in the process of engaging all students in high levels of thinking and participation. Currently, most students are not consistently challenged to push their thinking.

Supporting Evidence

- Although some students were asked to answer probing questions such as, “How did you end up here? Was it by choice?” in a social studies class and “Can someone please present an argument for a bar graph?” in a science class, across most classrooms questions were not aligned to the more developed stages of the *Depth of Knowledge* (DOK) levels. For example, students were asked, “Who hates this assignment?” in a social studies class and a series of inquiries that elicited rote, one-word answers with no requirement of an explanation in two different math classes. These questions did not challenge students to push their thinking or engage with the material in a meaningful way. Periodically however, teachers were observed asking students to explain their thinking and asking, “Does anyone have anything to add?”
- Although students were often seated in groups, many still participated in teacher-directed activities. In four different classes, students sat quietly at their desks for ten minutes or more and listened to the teachers’ explanation of the content or skill to be learned.
- Discussions were often teacher-centered with limited contributions from students. In a math class, the teacher stated a problem, wrote it on the board, and then asked the class, “How would you solve this?” Before a response from students could be given, the teacher worked out the problem. The teacher then asked, “How can we be sure this works?” A student was called to the board to display a check of the problem. While the student was working, the teacher proceeded in checking the problem while the rest of the class observed, which did not give all students in the class an opportunity for engagement.

Additional Findings

Quality Indicator:	1.1 Curriculum	Rating:	Proficient
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Findings

School leaders and faculty have made decisions to ensure that curricula are aligned to Common Core Learning Standards, integrate the instructional shifts, and include academic tasks that are rigorous and emphasize higher order thinking skills across subjects, grades, and learners.

Impact

A variety of learners are consistently exposed to rigorous curricula, which includes academic tasks that push critical thinking and promote college and career readiness for all students.

Supporting Evidence

- School leaders' curricula selections are aligned to the Common Core Learning Standards and require students to be prepared to explain and present their work in order to be properly college and career ready. The inclusion of mandated digital projects across all curricula requires students to participate in a rigorous and creative task. Students must show reasoning and planning supported by evidence in the creation of these projects and then design, plan, construct, and produce the creations. The task is complete when the project is presented and scored by teachers and peers.
- Decisions were made by school leaders and faculty to include several instructional routines and rigorous tasks across grade and subject curricula. There is evidence of reading, writing, thinking, and dialog routines in all reviewed English Language Arts (ELA), math, science, and social studies curriculum maps. The following aligned instructional routines and tasks were included throughout reviewed units: critical, close, and independent reading to support students' literacy skills and their ability to compare, contrast, and analyze. Student generated questions, summary, closure and reflection tasks are also included to support students' ability evaluate, reason and explain. Tasks that called for students to annotate the text, a task that supports the students' ability to cite evidence and develop a logical argument, were also included across curricula.
- In order to support English Language Learners (ELLs) access to the Common Core Learning Standards aligned content, ENL teachers worked together to differentiate the English Language Arts (ELA) curriculum by modifying tasks and routines included in school wide curriculum maps. The use of graphic organizers, guided reading, collaborative annotation, and text debriefing are just a few of the curriculum modifications added to scaffold material for ELL access. The grade 6 literacy curriculum for ENL students also includes on demand writing and portfolio writing to maintain this support.
- To accommodate different learning styles, and support the students with disabilities and ELLs, school leaders and faculty incorporated *Word Generation*, a vocabulary acquisition program, into school curricula. This online program supplements units and lesson plans by providing support that extends beyond the classroom.

Quality Indicator:	2.2 Assessment	Rating:	Developing
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Findings

Across classrooms, teachers inconsistently use assessments, rubrics, and grading policies that are aligned with the school's curricula. Teachers' assessments practices schoolwide inconsistently reflect the use of ongoing checks for understanding and student self-assessment.

Impact

Although the school has developed assessments aligned to the curricula to evaluate and provide actionable feedback for teachers, actionable feedback for students is inconsistent, and the feedback and uneven assessment practices serve as missed opportunities to improve student performance.

Supporting Evidence

- Although teachers across content areas create and use two- and four-point rubrics, there were few examples of teacher comments beyond the scoring of the rubric. There was also evidence of a self-reflection assessment form entitled, "Reflection Sheet: Original Writing Piece." Completed forms that students had used to assess their work were not in evidence.
- Portfolios, notebooks, and displayed student work included limited feedback with clear direction on what specific steps students needed to take to improve their next effort at the targeted skill. Check marks and comments such as "Good Work!", "You are improving" and "Getting Better" were prevalent on student work. Teacher comments such as, "Excellent work, just a few grammar errors. Make sure you include all of your questions in the evaluate section," that instructed the student on what he needed to do next to improve the assignment, were rare.
- Most students interviewed were not able to speak to next steps for moving their work products to the next level based on any written feedback given to them by their teachers. When asked how they know what to do to improve their work or get a level three or four on work that had been rated level two or three, most struggled and were not able to reply. One student offered that her teacher helps her get better. A later review of that student's work portfolio revealed three rubrics with results circled and no evidence of any further feedback from any of her teachers.

Quality Indicator:	4.2 Teacher teams and leadership development	Rating:	Proficient
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Findings

The majority of teachers engage in structured inquiry-based professional collaborations to promote school goals and the implementation of Common Core Learning Standards. Teachers have a voice in making key decisions that build leadership capacity.

Impact

Inquiry team collaborations promote the achievement of school goals and strengthen teacher capacity. Team decisions to improve teacher practices and student learning are developed using teacher leader input.

Supporting Evidence

- Teacher team interviews, agendas, and minutes from the weekly scheduled inquiry team meetings show evidence that the majority of teachers are engaged in inquiry-based professional collaborations to review, analyze, discuss, and make instructional decisions based on student work. After a review of data by a team consisting of English language arts, math, science, social studies, special education, and ENL teachers, the team determined that students shared a universal need to strengthen their more formal writing skills.
- Teacher practice in supporting student writing increased across grade and subject areas due to the use of schoolwide writing tools created and implemented by teacher inquiry teams. All teachers, including math and science, increased the number of writing tasks in their lessons. These tasks were reviewed and adjusted to improve student progress towards writing goals.
- The school wide practice of using the acronym R.I.D.D. which stands for “restate, infer, details, details,” was created to remind students to restate the topic, issue or problem, use surrounding context to make inferences that will develop a question to be answered in the writing, add details and then add even more details. Documented inquiry team conversations show that review of student work and data prompted teachers to revise this prompt. The inquiry team determined that students across grades and subject areas were struggling with the “I” in the writing prompt and needed support and with their inferencing skills. The inquiry teams produced a new prompt to meet student needs. R.A.C.E.R., which now reminds students to “restate, answer, cite evidence, elaborate (which also can include examples and explanations) and review.” Two- and four-point rubrics to assess success of the new writing prompt were also the product of inquiry team collaborations.