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

P.S. 115 Daniel Mucatel School serves students in grade PK through grade 5. 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

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>To what extent does the school…</th>
<th>Area</th>
<th>Rating</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>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</td>
<td>Additional Finding</td>
<td>Proficient</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>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</td>
<td>Area of Focus</td>
<td>Developing</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>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</td>
<td>Additional Finding</td>
<td>Proficient</td>
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</tbody>
</table>
### School Culture

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>To what extent does the school...</th>
<th>Area</th>
<th>Rating</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1.4 Maintain a culture of mutual trust and positive attitudes that supports the academic and personal growth of students and adults</td>
<td>Area of Celebration</td>
<td>Well Developed</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3.4 Establish a culture for learning that communicates high expectations to staff, students and families, and provide supports to achieve those expectations</td>
<td>Additional Finding</td>
<td>Well Developed</td>
</tr>
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</table>

### Systems for Improvement

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<tr>
<th>To what extent does the school...</th>
<th>Area</th>
<th>Rating</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>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</td>
<td>Additional Finding</td>
<td>Proficient</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>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</td>
<td>Additional Finding</td>
<td>Proficient</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>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</td>
<td>Additional Finding</td>
<td>Proficient</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4.2 Engage in structured professional collaborations on teams using an inquiry approach that promotes shared leadership and focuses on improved student learning</td>
<td>Additional Finding</td>
<td>Proficient</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>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</td>
<td>Additional Finding</td>
<td>Proficient</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
**Area of Celebration**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Quality Indicator:</th>
<th>1.4 Positive Learning Environment</th>
<th>Rating:</th>
<th>Well Developed</th>
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</table>

**Findings**

The school’s approach to culture-building and discipline is informed by a theory of action that is guided by a schoolwide focus on recognizing and building student character. Staff and families have aligned learning opportunities.

**Impact**

A focus on character development and positive discipline results in a safe and inclusive environment where all have a meaningful voice, students and adults thrive, staff and family are supported and students have adopted effective academic and personal behaviors.

**Supporting Evidence**

- As a *Respect for All* school, the school community believes that a safe and inclusive culture is built by focusing students and adults on efforts to develop character traits such as strength, honor, integrity, nobility and excellence, known throughout the school as SHINE. These traits are the hallmarks of the school’s Positive Behavior Intervention System (PBIS), a tiered, schoolwide behavior system that is adhered to and reinforced across a vast majority of classrooms, in the hallways, cafeteria, bathrooms, and auditorium, in the schoolyard and at school events on and off campus. Students and staff use a common language to demonstrate and practice desired behaviors, such as “I SHINE when I am honorable so I will use kind words and an inside voice.” Students are recognized consistently by peers and teachers alike for demonstrating SHINE through verbal recognition, points and incentives such as trips to the school store.

- The school has several structures in place to ensure that students are at the center of efforts to continually improve the school’s culture. One such structure is the system of restorative circles held across the grades that vary in purpose from community building, intervening when a student feels hurt in the classroom or other environment, re-entry after a child has been removed from the classroom or suspended from school, or as an opening or closing activity for gatherings of communities. These restorative circles create a non-hierarchical space for problem solving that allows students to be heard, to hear one another, be reflective and pose solutions to community issues.

- Students also run an active student council where students create and plane SHINE celebrations and explore the many ways students can be good citizens in and out of school. The student council leads many service learning initiatives where students build community, recognize difference and build self-esteem, such as the St. Jude’s Math-a-thon, City Harvest Food Drive, and Hoops for Hearts. Student council agendas show that students shout out other students who have been exemplary in demonstrating SHINE and discuss progress for service learning projects.

- The school community strategically aligns professional learning opportunities, family outreach and supports that lead to student adoption of effective academic and personal behaviors. Teachers and parents alike spoke of the many opportunities available to them including training time to develop and sustain the school’s PBIS program, restorative circles, and de-escalating students in crisis. Parents spoke highly of the constant family outreach by teachers and staff, and particularly about the growing use of *Kickboard*, a new-to-the-school online tool for communicating in the moment about student behavior. As one parent reported, “my daughter is very headstrong and SHINE, and especially *Kickboard*, are giving me ways to discuss her behavior and reinforce it at home. It is really making a difference.”
Area of Focus

Quality Indicator: 1.2 Pedagogy | Rating: Developing

Findings

Across classrooms, teaching strategies are becoming aligned to the curricula and the school’s belief that students learn best through student-centered classrooms and use of the workshop model. Student work products and discussions reflect uneven levels of student thinking and participation.

Impact

While the use of partnered and small group work has created some student-centered classrooms, students are not consistently demonstrating high levels of thinking in discussions and producing meaningful work products as outlined in the Danielson Framework for Teaching.

Supporting Evidence

- The school leaders’ beliefs that students learn best through student-centered, group learning was evident in six of the eleven classrooms visited. While there was some strong student-centered group or partnered work in a few classes, teacher-directed independent work persisted in most classrooms visited. In some classes, students were seated in groups but engaged with the teacher rather than one another in learning, making it difficult for student work to reflect high levels of student thinking. In others, teachers missed opportunities for students to produce writing about their thoughts and command of strategies that they were using to solve problems. For example, a math class was observed where students discussed the strategy they used for problem solving with a partner, but there was a missed opportunity to have students write out their process for problem solving.

- Use of the workshop model was prevalent in many classes, however, pacing in some did not allow students sufficient independent or group work time. In one class, the teacher taught and modeled a reading strategy for the whole class and then quickly sent the students off to practice in texts that were differentiated for student groups. Questions to prompt student thinking and discussion were placed in the pages of the text ahead of time, so the students were able to dive right in to the story and take ownership of the questions and prompts with little interruption from the teacher. In four other classes however, the teachers held on to the questions, keeping the whole class together for too long to allow for students to engage in meaningful partnered or independent work, leading to uneven levels of student thinking and discussion.

- In some classes, students were seated in small, teacher- or paraprofessional-led groups, or students were seated in groups but given independent or low level tasks, creating missed opportunities for students to demonstrate high level thinking about the content. In a writing class, students were seated together but worked independently to copy facts from a book into an organizer with little understanding of what would be done with this information later. In another class, after students worked mostly independently to solve problems, the majority of students had the correct answers and waited as the teacher reviewed the problems.
**Finding**

School leaders and faculty ensure that curricula are aligned to the Common Core Learning Standards and integrate the instructional shifts, with a school-wide focus on problem solving and student use of academic language. Planning documents consistently demonstrate rigorous academic tasks that emphasize higher-order thinking skills for all students.

**Impact**

Through teacher team work and the use of Atlas Rubicon, curricula and academic tasks are consistently planned and refined using student work and data so that a diversity of learners have access to curricula and tasks that are cognitively engaging.

**Supporting Evidence**

- The school’s curricula is aligned to the Common Core and includes Teachers College Reading and Writing units, *GO Math!, Passport to* Social studies and school-created science, technology, reading, engineering, arts and math (STREAM) curriculum that follows the NYC Scope and Sequence. The school's library teacher and an instructional lead from the field support center work together with the school’s science, reading and math teachers to ensure that the STREAM curricula is project based and makes purposeful connections to science, technology and the arts, with a focus on geography across the grades. As demonstrated in a STREAM unit on world water issues in the global community where students engage in project-based learning about water pollution and access, the STREAM curriculum, drives the school-wide focus on problem-solving, collaboration and use of academic language in alignment with the instructional shifts to build coherence and promote college and career readiness.

- Teacher teams meet regularly to share strategies from previously taught and upcoming units and make revisions to curricula so that a diversity of learners, including students with disabilities and English Language Learners (ELLs), have access to curricula and academic tasks that are cognitively engaging. Teacher teams use Atlas Rubicon software to memorialize their work in detailing vocabulary of focus for units, create learning plans and activities and outline options for differentiation and extensions in a unit. For example, a third grade reading unit called, "Building a Reading Life," describes station teaching and project-based learning additions to support a variety of learners, as well as additional texts at various reading levels to support students in achieving the units goals.

- The school also hosts curricula to support their citywide gifted and talented program that encourages students to develop passions, research skills, collaboration and time management skills through collaborative tasks and project-based learning. As an example, in a fifth-grade gifted and talented class, students were tasked with reading an excerpt of Gary Soto’s *The No Guitar Blues*, then they were to gather questions and evidence from the text to use in an upcoming Socratic seminar. While the teacher called on students and posed questions in the lesson, the task called for students to develop their own questions and work collaboratively to understand the conflict present in the text, demonstrating cognitive engagement through writing and discussion. This lesson, part of the Junior Great Books curricula, aims to build critical thinking skills and develop the speaking and listening skills of students through text-based answers and rigorous discussion.
Additional Finding

<table>
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<tr>
<th>Quality Indicator:</th>
<th>2.2 Assessment</th>
<th>Rating:</th>
<th>Proficient</th>
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Findings

Teachers utilize assessments, rubrics and common grading policies aligned to the school’s curricula that provide actionable feedback to students and teachers regarding student achievement. Common assessments, including Teachers College Writing Tasks, *GO Math!* running records and Star 360 are used to adjust curricula and instruction.

Impact

Rubrics and grading practices consistently provide feedback to students regarding achievement and next steps in learning. Use of common assessments is leading to adjustments to curricula and instruction across grades and subject areas, and informs the school’s approach to academic intervention services (AIS) and response to intervention (RtI) for struggling students.

Supporting Evidence

- Across the grades and subject areas, teachers use rubrics and next steps provided by both teachers and peers to provide students with actionable feedback. In writing, tasks included checklists or rubrics in student-friendly language and levels of mastery. As an example, a third grade narrative writing task rubric noted grade level proficiency for a student’s inclusion of a lead, transitions, editing and organization. The teacher provided feedback connected to the rubric about the student’s use of a graphic organizer to support her organization and encouraged her to add more details to lift the level of her writing as the rubric suggests is appropriate for her grade level. Similarly, on a graded math chapter test, the standards covered were attached in the back and standards to be revisited were highlighted, along with the content focus and suggested intervention lessons to be retaught. These examples of clarity of student progress and next steps in learning were seen consistently across the grades and subject areas.

- Throughout the school, teachers and teacher teams utilize common assessments, including *GO Math!* chapter and end-of-unit assessments, Teachers College writing tasks, running records and Star 360 assessments to determine student learning needs and make adjustments to the curricula and instruction. Within the first thirty days of school, teachers assessed all students reading and math levels through online Star 360 assessments, running records or in class math work and assessments and then completed a second round in late November and early December. Teachers also administered common on-demand narrative writing assessment prompts across the grades with common criteria in the lower and upper grade bands. The school has also created a common grading policy of percentage scores and their alignment to levels one through four for use across all grades and subject areas. Teacher teams use the data to make adjustments to the school’s curricula and instruction in their classrooms.

- The results of common assessments, specifically Star 360, are also used to make adjustments to inform student AIS and RtI groups and track student progress toward their goals or the grade level standards. Students are pulled a few times a week to receive targeted instruction based on assessment results. In kindergarten, teachers have begun to adopt a common toolbox of strategies that students and families can practice at home to improve student learning outcomes. Use of common assessments has also led to an increased focus on vocabulary in math and additional professional learning opportunities for teachers in math instruction.
Additional Finding

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Quality Indicator:</th>
<th>3.4 High Expectations</th>
<th>Rating:</th>
<th>Well Developed</th>
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Findings
School leaders consistently communicate high expectations to the entire staff, particularly around academics and social-emotional learning, and provide tailored training. School leaders and staff effectively communicate and partner with families to support high expectations for students.

Impact
Consistent communication with staff and families around high expectations results in a culture for learning where students are progressing toward college and career readiness. Through inter-visitations, the school has created a culture of mutual accountability for those expectations.

Supporting Evidence

- School leaders consistently communicate high expectations to the school staff through a comprehensive staff handbook, teacher and school leader developed non-negotiables in mathematics and English Language Arts, observations and walkthroughs and inter-visitations by school leaders and teachers, leading to a culture of mutual accountability. The faculty handbook communicates high expectations for curriculum and instruction, maintaining the school's PBIS program in classrooms, parent engagement and other professional responsibilities. Non-negotiables created by grade level teams in partnership with school leaders create coherence and, along with the Danielson Framework for Teaching, serve as a springboard for inter-visitations among teachers where they are able to learn from one another and hold each other accountable for expectations for the learning environment, such as third grade expectations for their use of anchor charts, leveled libraries, flexible grouping, bulletin boards and word walls.

- Similarly, in addition to classroom observations, school leaders circulate “Walkthrough Noticings” to the staff after their brief visits across a grade level with a focus on a different area of the Quality Review Rubric and provide glows and grows in teacher practice. An example of an articulated expectation from a grade one walkthrough notes strong teacher use of academic language as a glow, and the grow states: “We would like to see all classes differentiate learning tasks for their specific learning groups, not class.” These noticings serve to communicate high expectations consistently across the grades and highlight exceptional practices in a way that makes teacher practice visible across grades within the school.

- Staff members use a wide variety of tools to effectively communicate expectations connected to a path to college and career readiness such as a parent handbook, the school's website, parent calendars, grade-level newsletters, social media, emails, texts, and phone calls to families. Typical of other grade-level newsletters, a fourth grade newsletter shares Common Core–aligned skills that they are focusing on for the month and ways that parents can partner with teachers to reinforce the same skills at home. Open school week and after school parent workshops help to make clear the expectations of the Common Core and give parents an opportunity to experience learning as their students do, while receiving tips for continuing learning at home.
Additional Finding

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<tr>
<th>Quality Indicator:</th>
<th>4.2 Teacher Teams and Leadership Development</th>
<th>Rating:</th>
<th>Proficient</th>
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Findings

The majority of teachers are engaged in structured, vertical inquiry teams that promote achievement of school goals and implementation of the Common Core. Teacher teams consistently analyze data and student work for students they share.

Impact

Teacher collaborations have strengthened their instructional capacity. Teacher team work typically results in progress toward goals for groups of students.

Supporting Evidence

- On inquiry teams, teachers look deeply at the demands of the Common Core, particularly in math, and are focused in specific areas, such as how to improve students’ problem solving abilities, or how to help students demonstrate deep conceptual understanding of core math concepts by applying them to new situations and speaking about their understanding. Vertical teams made up of teachers and staff from different grade levels or different areas of expertise use data to create inquiry-based problems of practice that focus on improving student outcomes in each cycle of study. For example, during a vertical math inquiry team, teachers shared common strategies that they have tried in their math instruction, what worked and what did not work in student use of open counting and math talk, resulting in improved teacher practice, as more teachers are tracking student participation in math discussions and noting the strategies that students are using to track successes and make adjustments.

- The work of the RtI team this year is focused on increasing student achievement more than teacher practice. This year, the team began using Star 360 assessment data and other teacher-created data points such as progress reports and teacher referral sheets to tailor individualized instruction for students and groups of students. The formalization of the team’s use of data to develop specificity in targeting skill work with small groups of students allows teachers to utilize phonics or reading comprehension curricula to improve student reading levels, as demonstrated in teacher records and student progress reports.

- Teacher teams also share their work, insights and practices with the whole staff at the end of every four week cycle. Through this sharing, teachers now have a “go to” person or team for several instructional strategies, supports and programs, like the ThinkCERCA argumentative writing program, the school’s SHINE program, and technology. This regular sharing of teacher team practices and strategies to support students strengthens the instructional capacity of teachers and allows teachers the opportunity to collaborate with colleagues on different grades and with different areas of expertise, as reported by teachers on reflection sheets.