Quality Review Report

2016-2017

P.S. 124 Silas B. Dutcher

Elementary 15K124

515 4 Ave.
Brooklyn
NY 11215

Principal: Annabell Burrell

Dates of Review:
February 2, 2017 - February 3, 2017

Lead Reviewer: Adam Breier
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

P.S. 124 Silas B. Dutcher serves students in grade K 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

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Instructional Core</th>
<th>Area</th>
<th>Rating</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td><em>To what extent does the school...</em></td>
<td></td>
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</tr>
<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>Developing</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>Additional Finding</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

**To what extent does the school...**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<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>Additional Finding</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>
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</tbody>
</table>

## Systems for Improvement

**To what extent does the school...**

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<thead>
<tr>
<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>
</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>
</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>Area of Celebration</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>Area of Focus</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>
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</tbody>
</table>
Area of Celebration

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Quality Indicator:</th>
<th>4.1 Teacher Support and Supervision</th>
<th>Rating:</th>
<th>Proficient</th>
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</table>

Findings
School leaders support teacher development with frequent classroom observation cycles and student data analyses. Prompt written feedback captures teachers’ strengths, challenges, and next steps using the Danielson Framework for Teaching.

Impact
Formal and informal classroom visits result in written feedback for teachers that make the expectations clear for teacher practice and the supports available to help teachers meet them.

Supporting Evidence

- The principal conducts frequent classroom observations and provides feedback utilizing the Danielson Framework for Teaching. Each rated item is supported with specific, detailed evidence from the observed class to support the rating. Next steps for teaching improvements are included throughout the class-specific evidence directed to specific components of the Danielson Framework for Teaching and at the close of each observation report. In addition, the principal plans the classroom observation cycle based on individual need as well as student need. This involves an initial observation cycle of the newer teachers. This observation cycle is then followed by a cycle during which all remaining teachers, in order from the least to the most experienced, are officially observed.

- Observation reports contain feedback that captures teachers’ strengths and weaknesses and is accompanied by next steps teachers should take in order to improve their practice and impact student success. For example, one teacher is praised for her creation and maintenance of a classroom environment of respect and rapport. This same teacher received feedback that addressed an observed confusion among students while reading the class science text. The principal suggested that the teacher use a graphic organizer, to help students understand how the continents once fit together. Additionally, feedback spoke to the importance of planning for English Language Learners (ELLs) and students with disabilities. The follow-up classroom visit is indicated as scheduled for one month later. Another teacher is praised for grouping students based on assessment data. This teacher received feedback on how to design group work for students that requires student-to-student discussion and stated that this would be a focus of the next classroom observation.

- In addition to the reports resulting from official classroom observations are the conversations that follow informal classroom visits. Notes from these conversations evidence feedback to teachers around conferencing with students. Feedback to one teacher included suggestions that conference notes be utilized as data for the planning of future whole-class lessons as well as individualized student supports. Additionally, this teacher was advised to visit with a specifically identified teacher in order to observe the methods used by this teacher in conferencing with students. Notes from another conversation evidence a conversation between the principal and a teacher about effective methods for teaching vocabulary. Some examples included the use of word walls that would be actively utilized during instruction as well as ensuring that the instruction of academic vocabulary was complemented by discussion of prefixes and suffixes.
### Area of Focus

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

A minority of teachers are engaged in teams that do not use an inquiry approach, focusing on problem-solving for individual students or non-instructional supports. Additionally, teacher teams do not typically analyze assessment data or student work.

**Impact**

Teacher teams have met to discuss current units of study, trips, and classroom rules.

**Supporting Evidence**

- The grade four teacher team met to review modifications that one teacher had made to the rubric used to rate student-written biographical pieces. The teacher presented the rubric and discussed the modifications he had made, including simplifying the rubric language and adding a visual. Teachers then read through student work samples and discussed the value of the changes that had been made to the rubric. No evidence was provided for other meetings this teacher team had held at any point during the school year.

- The kindergarten teacher team has met throughout the year to discuss a variety of issues. Among those issues are current units of study, upcoming trips to see a movie and go bowling, classroom rules, and planning for the Chinese New Year celebration. Review of the kindergarten teacher team agendas revealed that neither assessment data nor student work have been utilized to identify a problem of practice or in the discussions of current units of study.

- No evidence was provided for any teams other than the two teams mentioned above. One teacher reported and all present agreed, “This year, there is no inquiry work.”
## Additional Finding

<table>
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<tr>
<th>Quality Indicator:</th>
<th>1.1 Curriculum</th>
<th>Rating:</th>
<th>Developing</th>
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**Findings**

School leaders and faculty are in the process of aligning curricula to Common Core Learning Standards and the instructional shifts. Rigorous habits and higher-order skills are inconsistently emphasized across curricula and tasks.

**Impact**

Lesson and unit plans evidence uneven alignment with the Common Core and applicable content area standards, as well as integration of the instructional shifts. Additionally, curricular documents evidence an inconsistent focus on emphasizing rigorous tasks for all students, including ELLs and students with disabilities.

**Supporting Evidence**

- Review of lesson and unit plans revealed that the process of alignment to the Common Core Learning Standards and applicable content area standards is not yet complete. Of the nine lesson plans connected to the classroom visits conducted during the school visit, five showed no evidence of alignment with the Common Core or applicable State content standards. Additionally, a grade four English Language Arts (ELA) lesson plan indicated that the standards to be addressed during the lesson was a Common Core standard designed for a grade two class. Of the four unit plans provided, two were connected to kindergarten units and two were connected to grade one. Whereas, the two grade one units evidenced alignment to the Common Core, the kindergarten social studies unit was neither aligned to the Common Core nor to State content standards for social studies. A grade five reading unit plan was aligned to the Common Core, but was also labeled as a draft and dated July 2013.

- Review of lesson and unit plans also revealed that the process of integrating the instructional shifts is also not yet complete. The instructional shift calling for a balance between fiction and non-fiction texts is evident in the grade one reading unit. In that same unit, students are also relying on text-based evidence in the creation of a question-and-answer book about an animal. A kindergarten unit that covers addition is aligned to the Common Core and integrates one of the instructional shifts insofar as the unit is focused on a concept prioritized within the Common Core. This same unit also includes tasks that have the potential for students to develop a deep understanding of a math concept by having them access it from multiple perspectives when they are to decompose numbers into pairs of varying numbers while also constructing different addition problems leading to the same sum.

- Unit plans, curriculum maps, and pacing calendars across grades and content areas evidence inconsistent planning for ELLs and students with disabilities to have access. A grade four social studies lesson plan indicated that student groups differentiated by data. In a grade one math lesson plan, students were also seated in groups based on data. Additional differentiation was provided through three variations of each assignment within each station. A grade two reading lesson plan also accounts for leveled readings that would be assigned to students in their differentiated groups. However, six of the nine lesson plans connected to the classroom visits of this school visit contained no mention of strategies employed to give access to students of different learning styles or levels of success, ELLs, or students with disabilities. A kindergarten math unit details a menu of strategies that could be employed for ELLs but without indication of which strategies would be appropriate for specific tasks. Additionally, a kindergarten lesson plan indicated that students would receive differentiated worksheets. However, all students would receive the same worksheet regardless of their status as either an ELL, student with a disability, or their demonstrated level of success as demonstrated by assessment data.
Findings

Across classrooms, teaching practices are beginning to reflect a set of beliefs about how students learn best. Across classrooms, teaching strategies and scaffolds inconsistently provide multiple entry points to cognitively engage all students.

Impact

Teaching practices across classrooms do not yet fully reflect the school’s belief that students learn best when they work collaboratively in groups, ask each other questions, and justify their responses. There was uneven evidence of teaching strategies across classrooms that provided multiple entry points for students to access the curriculum.

Supporting Evidence

- During a grade four social studies and reading lesson, students analyzed a photo depicting European explorers interacting with Native Americans. Students used information from the photo to determine the identity of its subjects and make inferences as to what the subjects in the photo were discussing. After each student identified the subjects and their notions as to the subjects’ purpose in meeting, students challenged each other to support their determinations with evidence from the photo. During a grade one reading lesson, students were grouped by reading level and all correctly reported the reading level of each member of their groups. Additionally, they were engaged in a task requiring them to confer with each other about the books they were reading. However, opportunities for having students ask each other questions and conduct student-to-student conversations were missed. An example of this was when one student in a grade two math lesson was called on to answer a math word problem and determine what kind of word problem it was. During a grade four writing lesson, students sat silently during the length of the class visit while individually working on assignments.

- Teaching strategies in some classes provided multiple entry points for students. In a grade four reading lesson, students were seated based on their reading levels and each group received a modified version of the same text, leveled to their group’s ability. This was also evident in a grade one reading lesson in which each group was reading a text leveled to their group’s needs. Additionally, students’ individual and group needs were met during a grade one math lesson as students were grouped based on data and circulated through four different stations. At each station, students received tasks that were differentiated for students’ individual needs. During a kindergarten reading lesson, while some students had only a text in front of them, other students had texts supported by pictures designed to assist ELLs in understanding of the passage.

- While teaching strategies offered multiple entry points in some classes as discussed above, they were not consistently provided for students across classes. During a grade five social studies class, students sat in a whole-class circle while discussing the value and importance of the European explorers. One student served as facilitator of this discussion. However, approximately five students dominated the conversation while an equal number of students did not contribute to the discussion. During a grade four writing lesson, all students worked individually on an identical assignment without any additional supports available either to all students or differentiated to students based on individual need. During a grade two reading lesson, all students read from same text and used an identical Venn diagram, without differentiated supports, in comparing and contrasting information from that text.
**Findings**

Across classrooms, teachers use rubrics, checklists and hand signals aligned with the school’s curricula to inform feedback to students. School leaders use common assessments to determine student progress toward goals.

**Impact**

Students utilize teachers’ actionable feedback and use assessment tools in order to increase their achievement. Teachers use data from the State ELA and math exams, along with curriculum-based assessments, in the design of student groups.

**Supporting Evidence**

- Across classrooms, samples of student work showed teacher-written actionable feedback that students are using for improvement. For example, a teacher advises a student to add more details in an assignment that had students write a sequel to *Alice in Wonderland*. Work posted in a grade one classroom evidenced a writing assignment in which students wrote about the similarities between *needs* and *wants* in a unit covering goods, services and peoples’ economic choices. Teacher feedback advises students to give examples of *needs* and *wants* to support their definitions, while in other cases the teacher uses feedback to review the definitions themselves. Feedback to students in a kindergarten class advises students to check their answers to make sure they are correct and to show their work. One student reported she began to focus on adding more details to her writing after her teacher repeatedly gave the same feedback and that her grades have increased as a result.

- Across classrooms, rubrics and checklists are used as tools of support for student growth. Rubrics that are aligned with the curricula, along with rubrics and checklists that have been modified for student use, are used across grades and content areas. Evidence of students’ use of these tools is posted on classroom walls, on hallway bulletin boards, and reported by the students themselves. One student reported and all present agreed that students use rubrics that are designed for students as well as the rubrics that teachers use to rate their work.

- Across the school, teachers analyze the data resulting from the State math and ELA exams along with the various assessments aligned to the curriculum. Findings from this analyses result in the different student groups for math, reading, and writing at the beginning of the year. Student groups change throughout the year based on changing trends and areas such as number sense have been identified as a common deficiency. As a result of analysis of math data, teachers found that students in grades kindergarten through grade two were struggling with number sense while the students in grades three through five needed some assistance in fully explaining the processes they take in completing math equations. Teachers are individually exploring different strategies and games to implement across the school in order to address these concerns, including the use of a protocol for talking about math problems to ensure understanding of those problems before students attempt to solve them.
**Additional Finding**

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<tr>
<th>Quality Indicator:</th>
<th>3.4 High Expectations</th>
<th>Rating:</th>
<th>Proficient</th>
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**Findings**

High expectations are consistently conveyed to staff through documents and professional development (PD) aligned to the Danielson *Framework for Teaching*. The school provides ongoing information to families regarding student progress towards college and career readiness.

**Impact**

The faculty handbook and a variety of memoranda help staff understand the high expectations to which they are held accountable. Communication with families, along with monthly student progress reports, provides opportunities for them to understand student progress towards meeting standards.

**Supporting Evidence**

- Review of the faculty handbook reveals that, along with high expectations for professionalism and collegiality among faculty members, conveyance of high expectations that are aligned with the Danielson *Framework for Teaching*. Faculty handbook sections dealing with expectations around the design and delivery of instruction are directly aligned to the applicable components of the Danielson *Framework for Teaching*. Other examples of instructional expectations conveyed in this document detail the value and importance of regular in-class student assessment, public celebration of students’ successes through bulletin boards, creating a supportive classroom environment, and the adjustment of instruction so that it meets all students’ needs.

- Review of the PD Plan and PD session agendas reveals a strategic system of training for teachers. The PD plan details the target teacher group for which each PD topic is designed, a description of the topic and how it will assist teachers in differentiating instruction, the PD provider, as well as expected outcomes and an assessment plan to gauge the effectiveness of the PD. Some topics of PD include co-teaching practices for ELLs and students with disabilities, the power of productive struggle, critical thinking, and supporting ELLs in writing and reading. Additionally, teachers new to the professional have been exposed to high expectations through a series of workshops around the questioning and discussion techniques, and assessment of student learning, two of the domains from the Danielson *Framework for Teaching*.

- The school hosts a variety of workshops and events for families that communicate expectations for student progress toward academic success. Some of these events are reading and math activities connected to current themes such as the reading and craft activity at the Thanksgiving Celebrations and the math and craft activity at the Winter Wonderland. Future events include a poetry writing and public reading event celebrating spring as well as an art activity in honor of mothers and fathers. The school maintains a website on which an event calendar is maintained as well as ideas for families to help with their children’s success including an idea of the day, weekly quizzes, an “Ask the Experts” section as well as daily academic tips. Printed copies of monthly calendars are translated into Spanish and Chinese. Additionally, families receive progress reports between the issuance of official report cards in order to regularly communicate their child’s progress and areas of growth.