Quality Review Report

2016-2017

P.S. 179 Kensington
Elementary 20K179
202 Ave. C
Brooklyn
NY 11218

Principal: Bernadette Amato

Dates of Review:
January 11, 2017 - January 12, 2017

Lead Reviewer: Jennifer Eusanio
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. 179 Kensington 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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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>To what extent does the school...</strong></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>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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<tr>
<td>School Culture</td>
<td>Area</td>
<td>Rating</td>
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<td>--------------------------------------------------------------------------------</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>To what extent does the school...</strong></td>
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<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>
<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>Area of Celebration</td>
<td>Well Developed</td>
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<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Systems for Improvement</th>
<th>Area</th>
<th>Rating</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>To what extent does the school...</strong></td>
<td></td>
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</tr>
<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>Well Developed</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>3.4 High Expectations</th>
<th>Rating: Well Developed</th>
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### Findings

School leaders communicate high expectations to staff and provide support for integrating the instructional shifts into the curricula. The school staff effectively communicates their high expectations for students and partner with their families.

### Impact

Structures are in place, which lead to a culture of mutual accountability for staff and successful home-school partnerships to support student progress in meeting the school’s expectations.

### Supporting Evidence

- The staff handbook, together with daily memos and newsletters, provide staff information which communicate the school's goals and emphasize the instructional focus. Teachers contribute updates to the principal’s monthly newsletter in those areas which show progress towards these goals. As part of the goal to enhance literacy, staff members used the newsletter to list the types of professional learning sessions which positively impacted teacher practice and resulted in increases in student reading performance.

- Through post-observation debriefs school leaders provide support and feedback toward the school’s target areas which include designing coherent instruction, student engagement, assessment and rigor. A review of teacher evaluation reports reveals increases in the number of teachers receiving effective and highly effective ratings directly related to these foci. It is expected that all lesson plans and units of study are to include clear language objectives and rigorous questions using the Webb’s Depth of Knowledge protocol to ensure all students meet proficiency in literacy. A review of lesson plans from all subject areas reflects content and language objectives such as “I can read and say multi-syllable words by sorting words on a T-chart.”

- The school offers workshops and meetings to share the school’s instructional focus and provide parents with support in understanding how to help their child at home in order to meet their academic goals. Parents shared that one math workshop provided step-by-step explanations on how to use current math strategies that were helpful in assisting their children. Teachers offered resources such as websites where parents can engage in learning with their children. In addition, parents reported that emails and newsletters sent home provide insight into what their child is working on and tips on how to assist them. Several parents underscored that these supports have helped their children improve their grades on tests, other tasks and overall progress in school.
Findings

Teaching strategies have yet to consistently reflect the use of multiple entry points towards challenging tasks in order to enhance the quality of student work products and discussions for all students.

Impact

This uneven access for students to engage in rigorous academic tasks leads to missed opportunities for diverse learners to demonstrate higher-order thinking and problem solving skills across subject areas.

Supporting Evidence

- In a grade five English Language Arts (ELA) class, students were sharing their thoughts on how characters react when faced with societal issues using evidence from a text to support their responses. During the discussion, students responded to one another’s thoughts stating that they agreed on the fact that the character in one picture looked tired and hard working as a slave yet in another picture looked like a free person while dressed as a cowboy. The student cited evidence from the text that supported his describing the character this way. However, this level of engagement was not observed in most classrooms.

- In a science class, students worked on a task to help them understand the concept of camouflage and how it helps animals survive. The teacher asked groups of students to pretend to act as birds that were predators and use a pincer grasp, which represented their beaks to collect multi-color paperclips placed on assorted colored paper. The paperclips represented the prey attempting to camouflage themselves within their surroundings, the colored paper. When asked how this helped them understand how animals use camouflage for survival, students were unable to provide answers to match the content objective for the lesson or stated they didn’t know.

- In some classes, teachers used limited amounts of scaffolds and strategies that allowed students to answer low level questions. In a social studies class, the teacher asked students to share what they had learned after completing a unit on the Western Hemisphere. One student was asked to list her peers’ responses on the Smartboard. The student’s answers consisted of simple facts such as the names of the mountains and forests in Central America and the types of plants and animals in a region. The teacher asked the students to write a summary of the important ideas they learned on the Western Hemisphere, and read aloud a sample of a student’s writing. Students did not receive additional supports to understand the text nor how to use it.
### Findings

School leaders and faculty ensure the curricula are aligned to the Common Core Learning Standards, integrate academic vocabulary, and number sense as the key instructional shifts while emphasizing rigorous habits within performance tasks across content areas.

### Impact

Purposeful decision making and a consistent emphasis on rigor effectively ensure academic tasks build coherence and promote college and career readiness for diverse learners.

### Supporting Evidence

- The school continues to utilize the *ReadyGen* and *GO Math!* programs, which are aligned to the Common Core Learning Standards. To address the needs of the English as New Language learners, the *Orton Gillingham* program is used as an additional support to help their acquiring the necessary decoding and fluency skills for success in reading. Other programs are employed in grades two-five, which supplement the reading curricula by offering additional reading strategies to aid in students working toward independence. The school's pacing calendars and units reflect alignment of all these programs to the curricula. This year, the school has opted to implement the *Passport* program for social studies, which aligns with the New York City scope and sequence and the state and national standards.

- In math development of fluency and number sense is reflected across lesson plans and units. In a grade two math lesson plan, the task focused on students identifying the place value and breaking apart two-digit numbers for addition problems. A plan for a kindergarten class targeted students’ conceptual understanding of subtraction by determining missing numbers in a number sentence. In addition, the use of academic vocabulary was emphasized across several units and daily lesson plans. In an ELA plan, time was allotted to provide students with exposure to social studies-related vocabulary such as the definition of illustration and terms relative to the subject of communities.

- Reference to higher-order thinking (HOT) questions and tasks were incorporated in the planning documents. In a grade five ELA lesson plan, the task asked students to reflect on the following question, "Why were the black soldiers on the frontier nicknamed Buffalo Soldiers? Was this meant as an insult or compliment? Explain your reason." In a grade four math unit plan, essential questions aligned to higher order thinking include, "How can you tell whether one number is a factor of another number?" and “How can you generate and describe number patterns?”
Findings

Across classrooms, teachers use or create assessments and rubrics aligned to the curricula and consistently use conferences and target questions as ongoing checks for understanding and self-assessment to gauge student understanding of concepts.

Impact

Assessment practices and actionable feedback lead to instructional adjustments and the development of next steps which support all students' learning needs and result in increased student achievement.

Supporting Evidence

- The school utilizes assessments linked to the *ReadyGen* and *GO Math!* programs on a monthly basis. In addition, teachers use rubrics aligned to the Common Core Learning Standards and school-wide curricula in each subject area to gauge student understanding of concepts. A review of student work demonstrates that feedback is provided in each subject in the form of glows for strengths and grows for areas of growth. On a math task, the comment, “The state for the yellow M&Ms does not match the picture graph. Count by two’s out loud while you point to the circle on the picture graph until you reach the number on your tally chart” provides a specific strategy to gear the student’s next steps. A review of other student work reflects similar comments giving clear actions for the student to use to support successful learning.

- During an interview, students stated that they use rubrics and their teacher’s feedback to determine the areas where they have demonstrated strength as well as the areas for growth. One student shared her book on frogs and stated that based on her teacher’s feedback and her rubric, she needed to work on adding more details and stronger vocabulary. Another student shared that her rubric reflected some Level 4s. She shared that she needed to work on the areas of dialogue and description as she received lower scores in those areas. Other students were able to provide similar responses and were able to share their next steps on how to improve their work.

- Teachers use conferences to check in with students and determine their level of understanding while they engage in a task. Across classes, teachers were viewed conferring with students and providing strategies to assist them with a particular task. In a math class, the teacher was viewed using questions to elicit student understanding of patterns and used questions to prompt students who had difficulty arriving at the correct answer. A review of student folders reflect the use of child-friendly rubrics where students reflect on their task and the teacher provides a response and feedback based on their self-assessment.
### Findings

Feedback is aligned to the Danielson *Framework for Teaching* and concentrates on coherent planning and student engagement capturing a teacher’s strengths, areas of growth, and next steps. Teacher observation data is used to design professional development aligned to teacher needs.

### Impact

The feedback provided articulates clear expectations for teacher practice and results in effectively supporting teacher development leading to the implementation of strategies addressing instruction, professional growth and self-reflection.

### Supporting Evidence

- Observation reports reflect a pattern of strengths and next steps using the Danielson *Framework for Teaching*. Targeted next steps are identified by component and contain teacher input addressing areas of growth. One report's feedback, targeting assessment practice, complimented the teacher for remaining active in conducting small group instruction for some students who struggled and suggested that taking the pulse of the room prior to conducting the small group would have helped the teacher gauge student understanding across the room. A review of additional feedback reports reflects similar next steps for improving teacher practice.

- Improvements toward schoolwide instructional expectations are reflected across teacher feedback reports. One report provided next steps for improving student engagement by suggesting the use of appropriate sentence starters to support independent writing and deep thinking. In addition, the feedback includes how the teacher shared that she felt a follow-up activity would benefit students after the lesson as reinforcement. During the next observation, the report reflects improvement in student engagement where tasks were aligned to the learning objective allowing for students to utilize comparison skills.

- The professional learning committee along with school leaders use a variety of data including student work, teacher input from surveys and observation data to develop an action plan for trainings, which occur on Mondays or via the United Federation of Teachers (UFT) coaches. Based on a review of data, cycles of training have focused on the development of clear learning objectives to ensure the content objectives and lesson design clearly align with the expectations of the Common Core Learning Standards. In addition, the use of teachers who have received highly effective on particular components serve as lab-site teachers for support of other teachers wishing to grow in these areas. One teacher who was paired with a lab-site teacher was able to demonstrate improvement in her lesson design and use of workstations after receiving this support as evidenced in recent observation reports.
**Additional Finding**

<table>
<thead>
<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 grade-level, reflective inquiry-based teams aligned to the school’s goals on increasing growth towards proficiency of the Common Core Learning Standards through the consistent analysis of targeted student work and data.

**Impact**

Instructional capacity and teacher practice have improved leading to progress towards grade-level, and cycle goals for groups of students.

**Supporting Evidence**

- As part of the school's goals, grade teams meet at least two times per week to discuss trends in student work and data to inform planning and instruction. Cycles of inquiry occur across a six to eight-week span and align with the year’s units of study. Review of pre, midline and post assessments aligned to grade-level goals and student needs is conducted to determine student progress. In grade five, teachers focused on student use of academic vocabulary and worked on increasing the use of annotation strategies to support close reading across subject areas. As a result of inquiry-based collaborations teachers decided to implement highlighting vocabulary in their texts for ELA and utilizing the circle, underline, box, eliminate, sense (CUBES) method when reading math word problems.

- Teacher teams use the *Objective, Reflection, Interpret, Decide* protocol to review trends in student work during meetings. In grade one, review of the data indicated student weakness in determining the main idea and supporting details. This resulted in the team's decision to use concept mapping and providing additional guide lines for those needing extra support in writing. An additional focus across teams consists of “word work” a focus on language arts. A review of team notes reflects discussion during the cycle one inquiry was centered on decoding and *Orton Gillingham* strategies to increase student use of those techniques as well as an emphasis on academic vocabulary. Teams continue to expand on these practices to include these strategies and the use of graphic organizers based on students' needs that surface during current meetings.

- This year the grade three team is focusing on fluency, decoding and using the *Goalbook* website as well as *Orton Gillingham* techniques to develop foundational reading skills especially when reading multi-syllabic words. The students assessed at levels 2R and below are targeted as they represent students who are reading below grade-level standards. During a team meeting, the teachers reviewed student passages and their ability to decode vowel and consonant patterns. Of the four students presented, two demonstrated progress towards the group’s goal. To support the students who were unable to reach the group goal, they reviewed strategies from the *Goalbook* website and decided to reinforce these skills with the use of chunking, highlighting and reassessing those students with the midline assessment to determine student progress.