Quality Review Report

2016-2017

P.S. K225 - The Eileen E. Zaglin
Elementary-Middle School 21K225
1075 Ocean View Ave.
Brooklyn
NY 11235
Principal: Michael Cosmai

Dates of Review:
April 27, 2017 - April 28, 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


School Quality Ratings

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Instructional Core</th>
<th>Area</th>
<th>Rating</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>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</strong></td>
<td>Additional Finding</td>
<td>Proficient</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>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</strong></td>
<td>Additional Finding</td>
<td>Proficient</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>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</strong></td>
<td>Additional Finding</td>
<td>Proficient</td>
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### School Culture

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<thead>
<tr>
<th>To what extent does the school...</th>
<th>Area</th>
<th>Rating</th>
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<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 Focus</td>
<td>Developing</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>Proficient</td>
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</tbody>
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### Systems for Improvement

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<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>Area of Celebration</td>
<td>Well Developed</td>
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<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>
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<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>
Findings

School leaders and teacher peers support teacher development through strategic supervisory and peer-observation of instruction. Clear expectations and feedback to teachers are constructed using the Danielson Framework for Teaching and are aligned with teachers’ professional goals.

Impact

School leaders and teacher peers support teacher development and elevate schoolwide practices by sharing actionable feedback and next steps resulting from official observations and peer intervisitations.

Supporting Evidence

- School leaders conduct frequent classroom observations that have been strategically planned so that each assistant principal has a grade-based focus. Grade-level teachers are divided into groups of kindergarten through grade two, three through five, and six through eight. The principal conducts all formal observations for teachers being considered for tenure and for those who are currently on an official improvement plan. Additionally, teachers regularly conduct intervisitations for which they are strategic in the selection of each cycle’s focus. Intervisitation logs reveal that teachers have observed each other to offer feedback and search for best-practices around the facilitation of guided reading, math group design, and readers’ workshop. Teachers reported improvements in their use of the gradual release method for instructional delivery, the design and in-class use of anchor charts, as well as increased ease of comfort in sharing lesson plans and instructional materials with each other through an online document-sharing platform.

- Feedback to teachers accurately captures their strengths and weaknesses and details next steps using the Danielson Framework for Teaching, supporting the goal that teachers increase student engagement in their classrooms. For example, one observation report advises the teacher to expand on the class’s use of the restate, answer, cite the source, and explain (RACE) paragraph-writing protocol by asking students to color code each part of their writing so that students could easily peer- and self-assess their success in addressing each of the four protocol elements in their writing. This teacher is also advised to not utilize the proofreading checklist until just before writing is completed, so that students focus more on ensuring that their writing is connected to the story’s theme, which was a struggle for some students during the classroom observation. Feedback resulting from a math lesson observation advised the teacher to integrate a discussion protocol so that students could deepen their understanding of the concept through a discussion of the steps taken and in answering peers’ questions about that process. Another teacher was advised to organize future lessons that involve multiple sources so that each source would be located at a different station and that each station would require students to consider that station’s information through student-to-student discussion around high-level questions.

- Teachers also receive feedback resulting from unofficial classroom visits that focus on the school goal of increasing all teachers’ capacity in increasing student engagement. This feedback is shared in-person shortly after classroom visits and via email. For example, emailed feedback discusses a teacher’s acceptance of individual student responses without engaging students in discussion with each other. The email closes with an appointment for a class intervisitation to observe a colleague’s facilitation of student-to-student discussion. Another example reveals a school leader’s observation that during a math lesson, a teacher was accepting responses from only a few students. Feedback advised the teacher to utilize any of a variety of strategies to ensure a greater variety of student engagement.
Findings
The school is developing structures to ensure targeted supports are provided for students. Alignment between professional development (PD), family outreach, and student learning experiences is also being developed.

Impact
Though the school is actively developing its support structures, current structures do not yet meet student learning needs and are not yet aligned to engage all stakeholders, thus missing opportunities to consistently promote the adoption of positive academic and personal behaviors.

Supporting Evidence

- In response to an increase in the number of disciplinary infractions as well as resulting student suspensions over the past three years, a student group is designing an anti-bullying program. The student group is called Take a Stand Kids (TASK) and their pilot program is focused on students in the upper grades. After a presentation in which TASK students discussed the reasons behind their program as well as their plan for recruiting and training fellow students in leading activities that would increase awareness of bullying and empower students to take a stand against bullying, students also spoke to a goal to eventually bring lower-grade students into their group. Additionally, a program has been launched this year that connects students in grades six through eight with students in the lower grades as lunchtime monitors. Lunchtime monitors have been trained in a variety of responsibilities ranging from assisting students opening lunch bags, escorting them to the restroom, and ensuring that the cafeteria is kept clean.

- Whereas students reported feeling supported by school leaders and individual teachers and all responded positively to a question about whether or not they are known well by at least one adult in the school, there was also consensus over the lack of a structure within which they were provided with targeted attendance supports or activities designed to foster social-emotional learning. School leaders and teachers are exploring two separate programs provided by outside vendors to employ next year in order to further improve the school’s culture. One of these programs would promote positive relationships between students in pre-kindergarten through grade six through activities designed to develop students’ respect and understanding of each other’s differences. Another program under consideration provides a framework within which students can become empowered as school leaders.

- The principal has attended numerous PD sessions unveiling a program designed to further all school community members’ emotional intelligence. The program guides participants in being able to recognize, fully understand, properly label, appropriately express, and effectively regulate emotions in the school setting. Additionally, a team that includes school leaders and guidance counselors attends PD sessions on using a functional behavior assessment (FBA) and creating a behavior intervention plan (BIP). Use of these tools will allow for targeted assessments of student behavior and the creation of individualized plans detailing the behavioral interventions and supports that would help reduce behaviors that interfere with students’ academic progress.
Additional Finding

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

School leaders and faculty ensure that curricula are aligned to the Common Core Learning Standards and integrate the instructional shifts. Curricula and academic tasks consistently emphasize rigorous habits and higher-order skills for all students.

Impact

Curricula are coherent and promote college and career readiness. Additionally, curricula are accessible for a variety of learners.

Supporting Evidence

- Review of the curricular materials revealed evidence of alignment to the Common Core Learning Standards and content area standards, as well as integration of the instructional shifts. A grade six English Language Arts (ELA) lesson plan details the requirement that students determine the theme for one of four works and support their argument with text-based evidence. The pieces about which students are to write represent an equal representation of fiction and non-fiction. A grade five ELA lesson plan includes an activity in which students are to determine the problems with which fictional characters are faced and to argue how these problems significantly affect the characters’ lives. Students’ arguments are to be supported by textual evidence.

- A grade two math lesson plan on telling time requires that students not only be able to determine time on a hand-clock, but that students also discuss their answers with a partner and be able to justify their answers. Similarly, a grade one math lesson plan guides students through an activity that has them representing the number ten in a variety of ways along with being able to discuss why their answers are accurate. In a grade five math lesson plan, students are to deepen their understanding of fractions and mixed numbers by framing their work with these concepts within real world applications related to students’ activities and sports programs. Additionally, lesson plans across grades and content areas evidence the planning for specific activities and scaffolds to support students’ understanding of academic vocabulary.

- Curricular documents provided evidence of emphasis on rigorous habits and higher-order skills for all students, including students with disabilities and English Language Learners (ELLs). Multiple lesson plans evidence strategic planning for differentiated groups. For example, in a grade five ELA lesson that has students engaged in a guided reading activity in which they are to track and analyze the problems that characters face and how those problems multiply, students are homogenously grouped and tasked with differentiated assignments that all lead students to a common lesson objective. Similarly, a grade five math lesson plan includes the organization of students into groups based on assessment data and the differentiated tasks that would build their understanding of fractions and mixed numbers. Additionally, this lesson is complemented by differentiated exit slips. Other lesson plans, including in social studies and science across grades, also evidence the purposeful planning of differentiated lessons that meet the needs of students organized into leveled groups.

- Lesson plans also evidence planning for the support of ELLs. For example, a grade five math lesson plan includes reference to the provision of a glossary of math vocabulary specific to ELL needs. Other examples include the grouping of ELLs by language acquisition level and assignments differentiated so that they can have equal access to instruction. In a grade seven social studies lesson plan, ELLs receive not only a vocabulary support sheet that includes visual representations for each word, but also a scaffolded text that has key vocabulary words highlighted in order to assist them in understanding the vocabulary words in context.
Additional Finding

Quality Indicator: 1.2 Pedagogy
Rating: Proficient

Findings
Across classrooms, teaching practices are aligned to the curricula and reflect an articulated set of beliefs. Additionally, student work products and discussions reflect high levels of student thinking and participation.

Impact
In all classrooms, students are situated in leveled groups and are tasked in instruction that gradually delivers instruction so that students are better equipped to develop and show their understanding. Students were engaged in student-to-student discussions with a high degree of thinking and participation.

Supporting Evidence

- Across all classrooms, teaching practices reflected the belief that students learn best when they are consistently engaged in lessons that involve direct instruction of content and/or a specific skill which is modeled by the teacher and subsequently tackled by students within in differentiated groups. This was evidenced and supported by teachers’ frequent use of the words “I do,” “We do,” and “You do” to signify the different stages of lessons. This was complemented by lesson objectives that were written in student-friendly language across all classrooms. The practice of providing lesson objectives in this way was also articulated as a facet of the school’s belief in how students learn best.

- During a grade one math lesson, students turned to their partner and took turns in discussing the various ways in which the number ten could be represented. During a grade five math lesson, students moved with their group through different stations. At each station, students were to work cooperatively in answering a word problem. All students participated in actively working through these word problems in this process, which evidence revealed as a regular practice across classrooms. As one student reported and all group members agreed, “We do this all the time. And just like a train, we’re going to stop at every station.” Another student directed my attention to a bookmark that detailed the six steps that students were to take while conducting a close reading activity for math work problems and stated, “If any of us ever get stuck, we just use this.” During a grade two math lesson, students worked individually in solving word problems in which they were required to find the value of different combinations of currency as well as determine the time based on different scenarios. At various points during students’ individual work, they were tasked with turning to a partner and sharing their answers and the steps taken to arrive at those answers.

- Using a graphic organizer that contained a set number of questions, students in a science class worked within groups and circulated through different stations, conducting a cost-benefit analysis as to which brand of sunscreen would be the greatest value given their different prices and potency. During a grade seven social studies class, students studying the experiences of plantation-based slaves in pre-Civil War America watched a video that detailed the laws that restricted slaves’ education and right to marry and denied their right to vote. After watching this video, students conducted discussions with partners about the conditions in which slaves were forced to live and the reasons why it is important to study those experiences. During a grade six ELA lesson, students were grouped in triads and discussed the symbolism embedded within the lyrics of “The Rose That Grew from Concrete,” and “Can’t Buy Me Love.” For example, conversation in one student group around the former resulted in statements about the value of never giving up, the blooming of a flower serving as a symbol of pursuing dreams, and the summarizing statement that it is always good to continually work toward a goal.
Additional Finding

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

Across classrooms, teachers use rubrics and checklists and 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 instruction and 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 grade-six students to add additional details from the text in support of arguments made in an assignment on comparing world religions. Another student received feedback about the importance of paraphrasing in order to avoid misusing quotes and inviting accusations of plagiarism. Feedback related to a math worksheet in which grade-two students answered three-digit addition problems advised students to proofread their narrative explanations for errors in content and punctuation. Students in a grade-six class received feedback on complete usage of the close reading strategy to identify the questions that need to be answered and to use the provided sentence structure when writing answers in order to ensure that the answers are complete. Additional next-steps offered by teachers ask students to use more transitional words at the beginning of sentences to help ensure a greater focus while writing, and for students to give equal attention to both the reasons for a civilization's advancement as well as its decline in response to a social studies assignment. 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. Another student reported, and all present agreed, that it is normal and expected that all teachers offer feedback to students that includes positive comments and advice for improvement.

- 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 designed for students as well as the rubrics that teachers use to rate their work. One student reported that in response to a teacher’s feedback about adding additional details to argument essays, he has been aware of this for every essay since that feedback and that his grades have gone from an average of threes to fours.

- Students’ reading level data, as well as unit and math curricula-aligned benchmark assessments, are used to determine student progress toward goals across grades and subjects. In order to address a schoolwide focus on reading levels, guided reading practices were integrated into grades kindergarten through five. This has also resulted in the decision to transition to a different curriculum for the 2017-2018 school year. In math, benchmark and interim assessments revealed that students are struggling with answering multi-step word problems. To address this, different grade levels are experimenting with a variety of protocols to guide student writing in math classes. Results from end-of-year assessments will be disaggregated so that teachers and school leaders can convene and made decisions about which protocols to continue using as they had been used this year, discontinue, or expand for the 2017-2018 school year.
## Additional Finding

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

Teacher teams consistently analyze data and student work for students they share. Distributed leadership structures are in place.

### Impact

Teacher teams conduct inquiry cycles that result in student growth in common student struggles connected to math. Teacher leadership contributed to decisions around curricular changes for the 2017-2018 school year and implementation of a program serving ELL students and parents.

### Supporting Evidence

- The grade five math team met to assess the impact of their initiative to increase students’ success with writing in math. The initial strategy implemented by this team involved student use of a checklist. However, not only was this tool found to be cumbersome, analysis of student work revealed no gains in students’ ability to write in the context of math. The next strategy implemented involved student use of a six-step protocol for using close reading strategies. This protocol guides students through reading the entire problem, writing a *gist* statement, crossing out superfluous words or information, highlighting important information, annotating, and restating the questions as a statement. Analysis of two students’ work revealed promising results. Whereas one student gained a deep understanding of the strategy as evidenced by the annotations and corresponding answer, analysis of the second student’s work revealed that further refinement to the strategy is needed. While the second student attempted use of the close reading strategies, incorrect responses and inaccurate annotations revealed that student may benefit from a reteaching session in which additional models are provided, with targeted discussions over the value of careful annotation and how that can serve as a guide to greater understanding.

- The grade two teacher team similarly found that students were struggling with answering multi-step math word problems. This team implemented the use of the circle the numbers, underline the question, box the key words, evaluate and draw, and solve (CUBES) protocol. The target student group included nine ELLs. All nine student showed gains in correctly answering multi-step math word problems. Additionally, use of this strategy also resulted in gains across the grade in 94 percent of non-ELL grade two students.

- Teachers serve as grade team leaders. In that role, teacher leaders are working with their teams to identify common areas of student struggle and guiding inquiry work toward addressing needs. Teacher leader voice played a role in decisions to change the writing curricula used across the school for the 2017-2018 school year. Additionally, teacher leadership has resulted in the formation of two reading programs. One program was designed for early intervention while the other program is focused on providing targeted instruction for ELL students and their parents on Saturdays. A group of five parents and their children met to model a lesson during which the teacher facilitate a guided reading lesson on a book about different nations’ flags. After facilitating the guided reading lesson, the teacher then conferenced with each parent-student group.