Quality Review Report

2016-2017

P.S. 270 Johann DeKalb

Elementary 13K270

241 Emerson Pl.
Brooklyn
NY 11205

Principal: Sylvia Wallace Anderson

Dates of Review:
January 19, 2017 - January 20, 2017

Lead Reviewer: Tracie Benjamin-Van Lierop
**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. 270 Johann DeKalb 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>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>Area of Focus</td>
<td>Developing</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
## School Quality Ratings continued

### School Culture

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>To what extent does the school...</th>
<th>Area</th>
<th>Rating</th>
</tr>
</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>Proficient</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>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

### Systems for Improvement

<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>1.3 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>Developing</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>Developing</td>
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</table>
Area of Celebration

<table>
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<tr>
<th>Quality Indicator:</th>
<th>1.4 Positive Learning Environment</th>
<th>Rating:</th>
<th>Proficient</th>
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Findings
The school community’s approach to culture-building, discipline, and social emotional support includes using relationship building teaching strategies. Structures are in place to ensure that each student is known well by at least one adult who helps to coordinate attendance, social-emotional learning, and guidance supports that align with student learning needs.

Impact
There is a safe environment and inclusive culture that is conducive to student and adult learning and students and adults treat each other with respect. Student voice is welcomed and valued.

Supporting Evidence

- Faculty became aware of a changing culture in the building requiring behavioral supports for some students. In an effort to support students and staff in regaining a positive momentum, the principal reintroduced the Book of the Month. One of the books read was *Have You Filled a Bucket Today* by Carol McCloud, which focuses on the use of words to support each other and those that do not. The reading resulted in teachers placing “buckets of love” in their classrooms that are filled by students throughout the day. A paper heart is created for each student and they are encouraged to write a note of kindness and appreciation to a fellow student or adult who has done something to improve their day. For example, a third grader placed a heart in a fellow classmate’s bucket to state his appreciation for the help she provided during a lesson.

- The student council wanted to acknowledge and honor the diversity that exists in the school so they met with the principal to suggest having an International Day and this is now an annual celebration where students are able to share their different histories with the school community. Students in different grades who had felt like they were struggling to acclimate to the school based on their race, gender, or home-life situations noted that there is always an adult in the building who they are able to speak with and with whom they are encouraged to communicate. Due to the small size of the school, students stated they feel safe and supported and appreciate being known by all adults in the building.

- The school community continues to work on their attendance and lateness improvement efforts by rewarding students in a monthly assembly. Students receive awards for good attendance, academic success, and citizenship. There is a “Showing Up Counts” bulletin in the school that reports monthly attendance percentages for each of the nine classes. A bridge class’ attendance had improved from 85.7 percent to 87.7 percent and the teacher attributed this increase to constantly communicating to her students the importance of coming to school and being productive citizens. Students stated that their teachers and counselors encourage them to come to school and to consistently be on-time.
Area of Focus

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

Teachers use or create assessments and rubrics that are beginning to align with the school’s curricula. Across classrooms, teachers’ assessment practices inconsistently reflect the use of ongoing checks for understanding and student assessment.

Impact

Feedback on student work varies across classrooms and inconsistently aligns to rubrics. Although teachers make attempts to check for student understanding, effective adjustments to their instruction to meet students’ learning needs are beginning to emerge.

Supporting Evidence

- Student work products for a project entitled *Unmasking the life of the Haudenosaunee / Iroquois: Then and Now* included teacher feedback, peer-to-peer feedback, and student self-assessment on all work samples that were aligned to the accompanying rubric. Teacher feedback on the same project in another class, where the assignment was modified, included comments to clearly inform students of their next steps while also highlighting the strengths of their essays. A review of student work in the lower grades across content areas revealed varied feedback. Some work samples included actionable feedback while others had minimal teacher comments lacking clear direction for students to make improvements.

- Students in the upper grades articulated the benefits of the provision of teacher feedback and a review of their work corresponded with their statements. In contrast, students in the lower grades were unable to specifically speak about the quality of feedback they received that connected to the work samples reviewed. An example of teacher feedback included, “Nice try. Next step is to use other word instead of repeating.”

- There were some observed efforts by teachers to employ checks for understanding strategies across classrooms. However, the attempted checks were often ineffective, as student misconceptions were not always addressed. For example, during an English Language Arts (ELA) lesson, the teacher asked students, “Does everyone understand? If so, thumbs up and if not, thumbs down.” and then proceeded to send students to the independent practice part of the lesson. Student observation and discussion revealed that students were unclear on how to proceed and they did not indicate to the teacher that they did not know what to do next. In another classroom during an ELA lesson, there were no checks for understanding or opportunities for students to self-assess their work, which led to the production of low level work products.

- In a math class, the teacher circulated around the room, conferring with students while they worked in groups. A student group that was unclear about the task called the teacher as they used a checklist to guide their work and realized that they needed additional support from the teacher. Another group that was able to complete the task correctly self-assessed their work using the rubric and determined it to be a level three rather than a level four because while their responses were correct, they were not yet able to articulate their thinking and teach what they had learned to others.
**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**

Teachers and the principal ensure that curricula are aligned to Common Core Learning Standards and integrate the instructional shifts. Curricula and academic tasks consistently emphasize rigorous habits and higher order skills to address students’ language development deficiencies across grades and content areas.

**Impact**

The school is building coherence and promoting college and career readiness for all students. The curricula are accessible to a variety of learners.

**Supporting Evidence**

- The school’s decision to focus on academic vocabulary and support student growth in language development is based on student assessment data that revealed deficiencies across grade levels. The school’s data also indicated that the English Language Learners (ELLs) are also deficient in their native language, which has informed the addition of the math curricula in Spanish. Curricular documents include student discussion protocols, discussion and question stems, and the use of technology. Reviewed lessons included opportunities for station work, purposeful grouping, differentiated texts, and checks for understanding. A grade four lesson on determining the theme of a story based on details from the text included a note-catcher organizer for students, a turn and talk partner activity, and station activities including an on-line reading station, an electronic tablet station, and a peer group assessment in which student groups answered text based questions about *The Keeping Quilt* by Patricia Polacco.

- A math unit highlighted academic vocabulary, the use of manipulatives for hands-on activities, tiered questions ranging in levels of difficulty, and time for students to reflect on their learning. Teachers in grades kindergarten to two have implemented the *Fundations* curriculum to address the needs of students who are entering the school as non-readers or at below grade reading levels. Twenty-seven percent of the school population is comprised of students with disabilities and teachers reported using technology and visual representations of academic vocabulary and that these have been an important component of lesson and unit plans.

- A social studies unit on Native Americans included the essential questions, “What is a society?”, “What is power?”, “How is power used?”, “How is power gained?”, and “How is power lost?” Students’ end of unit projects were differentiated to include an essay, visual representation of an Iroquois mask, or both. Academic vocabulary was embedded throughout the unit along with a reference for a word wall, graphic organizers, and the use of videos. Although lessons and units provided during the review were rigorous, they did not include explicit examples of how students were expected to demonstrate their thinking.
Additional Finding

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<tr>
<th>Quality Indicator:</th>
<th>1.2 Pedagogy</th>
<th>Rating:</th>
<th>Developing</th>
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Findings

Across classrooms, teaching practices are becoming aligned to the curricula and beginning to reflect a set of beliefs about how students learn best. Student work products and discussions reflect uneven levels of student thinking and participation.

Impact

The quality of student work products in the upper grades and lower grades varies and the needs of some learners, particularly in the lower grades, are not being met.

Supporting Evidence

- The faculty believes students learn best when they are engaged with their peers in small group discussions to solve problems and share their thinking. Students in a grade four class evidenced this belief as they worked in groups and fully participated in the different station activities. Students were able to demonstrate their thinking and articulate the purpose of the lesson in every group. In one group, students worked together to answer text based questions and when one student didn’t agree with another student’s response, he replied, “Show me in the text where it says that,” and the other student proceeded to show the group the section of the text that supported his answer.

- In a self-contained grades three to five bridge class, students began the lesson in a whole group and then transitioned into two smaller groups and two students had the option to work independently using an on-line literacy program to answer teacher generated questions. The teacher worked primarily with one group that needed additional support and another group worked collectively while sharing their thinking with each other. When asked what skill they were working on, a student responded, “We’re making mind movies” rather than visualizing, which was one of the academic vocabulary words of the lesson and is an instructional focus for the school.

- During a grade two math lesson, students worked in either pairs or triads to solve addition and subtraction problems. In some groups, students did not understand the task and were copying work from their group mates. Some students were not using math terms but instead, for example, used “take away” rather than subtraction. The teacher did not re-direct the students to use the appropriate academic language.

- Student work products across the upper grades represented writing across content areas and student discussions reflected students challenging each other’s thinking, working cooperatively, and teachers facilitating learning. Conversely, in the lower grades, instruction was teacher centered and students were unable to consistently articulate their learning, resulting in some work products that were incomplete or incorrect.
Additional Finding

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

The principal consistently communicates high expectations to the staff through Danielson *Framework for Teaching* professional learning sessions. The faculty consistently communicates expectations that are connected to a path to post-secondary readiness and offer ongoing feedback to families.

Impact

Training is provided to staff and there is a system of accountability. Families understand their child’s progress toward meeting expectations.

Supporting Evidence

- The principal sends weekly notes to the staff that center on the instructional focus of the school. For example, in a weekly memo sent to the faculty at the beginning of the school year, teachers were reminded to prepare for their planning conferences by reflecting on their professional learning needs and those of their students. The memo indicated an expectation for teachers to inform their professional development over the course of the year and align it with the Danielson *Framework for Teaching*. Based on teacher and student needs, one of the initial learning sessions for the faculty focused on domain one, planning and preparation for effective lesson planning. A teacher stated, “The principal supports us and treats us like professionals. She trusts the staff and has confidence in us.” Additionally, to address students’ literacy needs and increase teachers’ capacity to support the development and strengthening of their foundational skills, teachers were sent to a Wilson Reading System introductory workshop.

- Fifth grade parents are invited to the school’s middle school articulation information session to assist them with the application process. A parent of a fifth grader shared her appreciation of how much the guidance counselor and parent coordinator do to communicate with families regarding the transition to middle school. Parents agreed that the school overall does a good job of communicating with them and ensuring that their children are making academic progress and how they can be further supported at home. Teachers contact families to share positive news as well. A parent commented, “My son had a problem with his fine motor skills and his teacher gave me strategies to help him with his grip and writing and now the teacher is seeing an improvement, and she called to share this news with me.”

- Families receive regular letters from the principal that include information on the importance of students arriving to school daily and on time, parent-teacher communication, student clubs, and a reminder about the school’s instructional focus. A fall letter to parents included, “Regardless of the grade your child is in, we are all focused on improving our vocabulary and making our thinking clear to others through discussion. We ask that you discuss with your child what they learned each day. As you enter the building, note the words of the week and encourage your child to use the words in your discussions.”
Additional Finding

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<th>Quality Indicator:</th>
<th>4.2 Teacher Teams and Leadership Development</th>
<th>Rating:</th>
<th>Developing</th>
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</table>

Findings

The majority of teachers are engaged in structured professional collaborations that are beginning to connect to the school's goals. Some teacher teams analyze assessment data and student work for students they share.

Impact

The use of an inquiry approach is developing across teams. Improved teacher practice and progress toward goals for groups of students is a work in progress for lower and upper grade teams.

Supporting Evidence

- Teacher teams are expected to submit their meeting agendas and minutes to the principal. A review of minutes for the upper and lower grade teams showed an inconsistency and varied levels of comprehensive notes and agendas. The lower level grade team agendas included teacher roles, an ice breaker, the purpose and context for the meeting, a wrap-up and next steps. However, in some cases, there were no accompanying minutes to memorialize decisions or detailed next steps. The reviewed upper grade team meeting minutes included detailed notes, decision making for tracking student data, and a writing strategy to be used and reflected upon at the next team meeting.

- Teachers in the upper grades work collaboratively and share resources regularly with each other. A teacher shared a discussion protocol she created and the rest of the team adopted the tool. When observed by the principal shortly thereafter, one of the teachers had fully implemented the protocol in her class and students were utilizing the discussion sheet, deepening their conversation with each other and the teacher. Teachers on the lower grade team have started meeting consistently and are beginning to work on team norms and look at student work. The principal reports, “The greatest work they've done thus far has been identifying inquiry protocols to use during meetings.”

- A team meeting agenda and minutes for the lower grade team following a team intervisitation to an upper grade class included what had been observed – groups worked independently, students took turns talking, and the teacher moved the lesson along with open ended questions. The minutes did not include next steps, strategies to be attempted, or how individual teaching practice might be improved. During a team meeting, teachers discussed best practices and their intended plan to focus on their ELLs. One team member was assigned as a recorder, but there were minimal notes collected for future reference by members.