Quality Review Report

2016-2017

P.S. 273 Wortman
Elementary 19K273
923 Jerome St.
Brooklyn
NY 11207

Principal: Melessa Avery

Dates of Review:
December 1, 2016 - December 2, 2016

Lead Reviewer: Michele Ashley
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. 273 Wortman serves students in grade PK through grade 5. You will find information about this school, including enrollment, attendance, student demographics, and data regarding academic performance, at http://schools.nyc.gov/Accountability/tools/report/default.htm.

School Quality Ratings

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Instructional Core</th>
<th>Area</th>
<th>Rating</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>To what extent does the school...</strong></td>
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<tr>
<td>1.1 Ensure engaging, rigorous, and coherent curricula in all subjects, accessible for a variety of learners and aligned to Common Core Learning Standards and/or content standards</td>
<td>Additional Finding</td>
<td>Proficient</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1.2 Develop teacher pedagogy from a coherent set of beliefs about how students learn best that is informed by the instructional shifts and Danielson Framework for Teaching, aligned to the curricula, engaging, and meets the needs of all learners so that all students produce meaningful work products</td>
<td>Area of Focus</td>
<td>Developing</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2.2 Align assessments to curricula, use on-going assessment and grading practices, and analyze information on student learning outcomes to adjust instructional decisions at the team and classroom levels</td>
<td>Additional Finding</td>
<td>Proficient</td>
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</tbody>
</table>
## School Culture

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>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>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>
</tr>
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</table>

## Systems for Improvement

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<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>
</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 schoolwide instructional practices and implement strategies that promote professional growth and reflection</td>
<td>Additional Finding</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 Celebration</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>4.2 Teacher Teams and Leadership Development</th>
<th>Rating:</th>
<th>Proficient</th>
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</table>

Findings
Grade level teacher teams use the guidelines of the inquiry handbook to analyze assessment data and student work. Structures are in place to support teacher leadership.

Impact
Professional collaboration results in improved teacher practice and progress for students. Leadership opportunities give teachers a voice in key decisions that affect student learning.

Supporting Evidence

- Teachers meet weekly for inquiry on every grade and follow guidelines outlined in the PS 273 Inquiry Team Handbook. The Inquiry Handbook outlines core attributes for inquiry work that include shared mission, values and goals, commitment to results, continuous improvement, culture of collaboration, collective inquiry, and supportive and shared leadership. Each team aligns the inquiry focus to a schoolwide English Language Arts (ELA) or math goal, targets a particular Common Core Learning Standard and collaborates to implement new strategies for improvement. During the grade three team observation, the team was focused on improving students’ capacity to draw evidence from literary or informational texts. Teachers analyzed student writing pieces in which students used the R.A.C.E. (Restate the strategy, answer the question making an inference, cite text evidence, and explain your evidence) strategy to make inferences from a selected text.

- Teachers follow a protocol to review student work, identify strengths and areas for improvement, and share strategies for improvement. During the grade three meeting teachers identified next steps for instruction which included the use of visuals to practice inferencing, reviewing the different types of inferences, providing students with a lower Lexile leveled text to practice inferencing and using teacher writing to model peer feedback using glows and grows. Teachers shared that working together as a team has contributed to shared practices across the grade and progress for groups of students. Based on student work samples assessed using a schoolwide Holistic Writing Rubric, teachers have observed improvements in student short responses across the grade.

- Leadership provides teachers with opportunities for leadership as members of the leadership cabinet, grade leaders, facilitators of professional development, and members of the Teacher Leadership Program. Teachers initiated the application to the Teacher Leadership Program and volunteered to participate. Teachers designed a Parent Compact, an optional New York Department of Education contract parents sign to agree to be partners in their child’s education. Teachers also redesigned the format of parent conferences to make grade level presentations to parents that include grade level goals and expectations before moving to individual conferences. Grade teams present their findings and share best practices across grades through professional development sessions and bulletin board presentations that include the inquiry focus, action plan, student work samples, new strategies, and learning outcomes. Teachers shared that their teaching practices have improved based on strategies shared by teacher leaders across the grades. Teachers highlighted the use of the RACE strategy, questioning techniques using Webb’s Depth of Knowledge, and sensitivity practices as areas of growth that directly affect student learning.
Findings

Across classrooms, teaching practices are beginning to reflect a set of beliefs around how students learn best through engagement in higher order tasks and have opportunities to participate and collaborate with peers. Teachers in some classrooms use questioning and scaffolds to provide multiple entry points into the curriculum.

Impact

Although teaching practices are informed by the Danielson Framework for Teaching and instructional shifts, inconsistencies across classrooms result in uneven levels of student engagement and uneven demonstrations of student thinking.

Supporting Evidence

- School leadership highlighted key practices that align to their beliefs of how students learn best through the inclusion of formative assessment, the use of equity sticks, timers, turn and talk, and student conversation. Across classrooms, teachers have incorporated the schoolwide practice of equity sticks to ensure equal opportunities for speaking and listening and teachers take notes on student performance during instruction. Teachers write students names on sticks and teachers select names at random to response to questions and share information. During a grade five lesson, the teacher used equity sticks to call on students during a math activity and took notes on their responses.

- Teachers have begun to incorporate scaffolds for students with disabilities and those in need of support. Some teachers use a digital timer to support lesson pacing and have begun to engage students in peer-to-peer conversation to provide opportunities for students to share their thinking. In a math classroom, the teacher used a digital timer on the interactive white board to pace student work and timed students during a turn and talks prompt. Students discussed the relationship between paired numbers in a chart to identify the multiplication rule. In an ELA lesson the teacher prompts students to turn and talk to discuss how a characters actions impact the events in a story. During the turn and talk some students used sentence prompts to identify a character’s action and describe how those actions impacted the story. The scaffolds and opportunity to share thinking provided in these classrooms was not provided across the majority of classes visited.

- Across classrooms, the uneven level of teacher questioning limited students’ opportunities to engage in appropriately challenging tasks. Although some teachers have begun to use higher-level questions to engage student thinking, the level of questioning in other classrooms remains at Webb’s Depth of Knowledge levels one and two. In one math classroom, the teacher asked students to explain the relationship between sets of numbers, hypothesize a mathematical rule, and test their hypothesis. However, in another math classroom kindergarten students were asked to repeatedly count objects up to five, although many students were ready to move to the next portion of the lesson.
### Quality Indicator: 1.1 Curriculum

**Rating:** Proficient

**Findings**

School leaders and faculty ensure that the core subject curricula and teacher-created social studies curricula are aligned to the Common Core Learning Standards and content standards and incorporate the use of academic vocabulary across content areas. Curricula emphasizes higher order tasks.

**Impact**

Alignment to standards and the integration of the instructional shifts builds coherence across content areas and promotes career and college readiness for all students, including ELLs and students with disabilities.

**Supporting Evidence**

- The school utilizes the *ReadyGen* curriculum for ELA, *GO Math!* for math instruction, Harcourt Science for science, and teacher-created social studies lessons aligned to the New York State scope and sequence. Lesson plans across content areas build coherence through the integration of academic vocabulary and the use an essential question aligned to an identified Common Core Standards or content standard. A reading lesson plans for the introduction of the following words and the corresponding page numbers in the text *Fragile Frogs*: fungus, altitudes, native, vulnerable, and exposed. A science lesson introduced the terms: seed, seed coat, embryo, and cotyledons. A reading lesson included the reading standard, what students will know at end of the lesson and listed the use various text features to locate key facts or information in a text whilst asking the essential question, "How do text features in an informational text help readers understand the main topic and key ideas?"

- Across grades and content areas curricula includes plans for the close reading of text. A grade one *ReadyGen* lesson included plans for the close reading of text to identify unfamiliar words like mammal and use the glossary to define the words. The lesson then required students to use that definition to determine if animals in the text are mammals. A grade three lesson required students to conduct a close reading of a variety of texts with a focus on how characters actions change over time and contribute to the sequence of events. Lesson plans include plans for scaffolds and strategic support for students with disabilities, ELLs and struggling students. Planned scaffolds include partner support, sentence prompts, manipulatives and teacher led strategy groups. An *ELA* lesson plans for the teacher to support students who struggle to understand text features by teaching a small group lesson on how to locate and use the table of contents, chapter headings, and glossary. A *Math* lesson includes plans for tiered activities.

- Across content areas, lesson and unit plans require students to cite text evidence and provide evidence to support their claims. A grade two science lesson required students to complete a diagram to prove the claim that a seed has three parts. A reading lesson tasked grade four students to identify the main idea of a paragraph, support their claim with details from the text, and explain how the details relate to the main idea of the larger text. A grade two *Math* lesson asked students to write or draw to prove that one hundred and four tens and fourteen tens names the same amount.
Findings
Across classrooms teachers use and create assessments and rubrics aligned to the curricula. Teachers across content areas administer common assessments and analyze the data to monitor student progress toward goals.

Impact
Teachers provide students with actionable feedback and next steps during student conferences and use assessment data to make adjustments to curricula and instruction.

Supporting Evidence

- Teachers use and design rubrics aligned to the ReadyGen, GO Math!, Harcourt Science, and the social studies scope and sequence. Across grades teachers use a holistic writing rubric aligns to the ReadyGen curricula and assesses student writing on a one to four scale ranging from emerging/developing (one), approaching standards (two), meets standards (three), and exceeds standards (four). The writing rubric includes indicators that all or most of the writing aligns to the rubric score. The descriptors for when students meet standards include that they can clearly focus and develop the topic, students can explain ideas with supporting details, they are able to begin with a topic sentence, they are able to organize ideas logically, and they have provided a conclusion.

- Teachers share actionable feedback and next steps with students during conferences. Across classrooms visited teachers conducted conferences, shared and took notes on student strengths and next steps. Student work samples also include written teacher feedback that identifies strengths and areas for improvement. One teacher noted on a level three piece of writing that the writing demonstrated understanding of the stories main idea and complimented the student on making text to self-connections and reminded the student to use sequence words. Teacher feedback on a level two piece of writing stated that the student was able to find details from the text to support their claim but needs to elaborate and use more grade specific vocabulary. Students interviewed shared that the feedback provided by their teachers helps them to improve their writing in future drafts.

- Teachers use data from Northwest Evaluation Association (NWEA) benchmark assessments, Dynamic Indicators of Basic Early Literacy Skills (DIBELs), unit assessments, and exemplars to determine student progress. Based on the New York State ELA and math data and beginning of the year NWEA assessments in reading and math teachers assign students to guided reading and math strategy groups for targeted instruction. School leaders and teachers also identified class, grade level, and schoolwide trends in student data and adjusted curricula and instruction. Based on a review of the ELA data teachers identified that students struggled in the use of the RACE strategy in short responses. Based on this trend the RACE strategy was introduced earlier in the year, particularly for grade three students who will take the state ELA test for the first time this year. Across the school, teachers also identified deficiencies in math computational skills. In response, teachers implemented Funday Friday during which teachers lead students in math games to build math fluency across the grades.
Findings
School leader provide training and consistently communicates high expectations to the entire staff through the Principal’s Insurance Plan and observation checklists. School leaders and staff consistently communicate grade level expectations to families and offer ongoing support.

Impact
Leaders support and clear expectations hold teachers accountable for student learning. Teachers provide families with guidance and support to understand their child’s progress.

Supporting Evidence

- School leader provides all staff with a copy of the Principal’s Insurance Plan. This document outlines the school goals for the 2016-2017 school year and provides data aligned to the 2015-2016 School Quality Snapshot and New York City School Survey. The plan includes a theory of action that identifies a schoolwide text, Classroom Instruction That Works, and aligns to the Danielson Framework for Teaching, Webb’s Depth of Knowledge and Bloom’s Taxonomy. The plan identified what leaders and teachers will master and do to help students achieve. According to the expectations of the plan, teachers are required to design coherent, rigorous lessons using research based strategies, look at student work using high, middle, and low criteria, and analyze data to pinpoint areas in need as well as create next steps to help students achieve the standard. Across grades, teachers have used student data to place students in low, middle, and high groups for targeted instruction.

- The school leader distributed an observation rubric to all staff which is used for all formal and informal observations and targets elements of instruction identified in professional development and agreed upon as best instructional practices. This rubric includes checkpoints for questioning and student discussion, the introduction of new vocabulary, equitable speaking, viewing and listening, guided practice, independent practice, and group work. The rubric also notes and assesses the teacher’s use of formative assessments that include observations, notes, show and tell, exit slips, thumbs up, reflection, and self-assessment. School leaders use this tool to provide teachers with feedback on their practices that align to the articulated teacher practices identified in the Principal’s Insurance Plan and professional development.

- Teachers and staff consistently share academic expectations with families via face-to-face meetings, post cards, and written communication. Every teacher contacts at least three parents weekly. Parents shared that they can communicate with teachers easily and frequently with teachers making themselves available on Mondays and Tuesdays after school to support parents and students. Teachers share grade level expectations with parents before conducting one-on-one parent conferences that outline individual student progress and next steps for students and families. During parent teacher conferences, teachers share student performance on benchmark assessments and identify areas for growth. Parents receive NWEA ELA and math progress reports that identify current math, reading, and language usage scores. The progress reports compare those scores to the grade level mean. The report also shares projections for student performance in spring 2017 and whether or not the student is on track based on college readiness benchmarks.
Additional Finding

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

School leaders support the development of teachers, including for those new to the profession, with frequent informal observations, and feedback that includes student data, low inference observations, wonderings, and next steps.

Impact

Clear expectations and alignment of feedback to the Danielson Framework for Teaching supports the development of teacher practices.

Supporting Evidence

- School leadership conducts required formal and frequent informal observations of instruction that are followed by verbal and written leader feedback. Leader feedback includes next steps for teacher practices that align to individual and school level goals. Feedback for this year focused on Domain three: Instruction from the Danielson Framework for Teaching and provided next steps for teaching practices aligned to questioning, student engagement, and assessment. Feedback from school leaders included observations of student work and academic behaviors. One report stated that there was minimal thinking by students, most students were passive, and were unaware of how they were going to be graded. School leaders suggested next steps for the teacher included allowing students to set their own goals, alternating between passive and active activities, and facilitating collaborative experiences that encouraged students to explore and investigate the set tasks.

- Feedback to teachers includes teacher strengths, challenges, and next steps aligned to the Danielson Framework for Teaching. Leaders also provide low inference observations of developing practices and recommend next steps for areas in need of improvement. In one report, the leader stated that whilst the teacher monitored student learning during whole group instruction, they needed to use questions and assessments to assess individual learning or misconceptions during instructional time. Feedback also included resources to support teacher growth and follow up meetings to answer teacher’s questions, and discuss any new learning. In several reports reviewed, leadership offers teachers links to instructional videos that demonstrate the recommended practice and schedules a follow up session to discuss the video content.

- School leaders analyze teacher and student data and place teacher performance and potential on a nine square matrix. Using this matrix a teacher’s combined assessment of performance and potential could place them along a one to nine scale. Based on this scale, a level eight placement states that a teacher meets all targets, demonstrates high potential for growth, is likely a candidate for promotion, and should be developed and coached. School leadership conducts initial meetings with teachers at the beginning of the year to review and discuss teacher observation and student data from the previous year. The school leader shares areas of strength and challenge, teachers review their own data and together they set instructional goals. Teachers are offered and receive support in the form of mentoring, inter-visitation, videos, articles, and professional development sessions. Some of the professional development topics have included Goal Setting in Six Easy Steps, identifying and understanding levels of questioning, close reading, Response to Intervention, and questioning strategies using Bloom’s Taxonomy.