Quality Review Report

2016-2017

P.S. 377 Alejandrina B. De Gautier
K-8 32K377
200 Woodbine St.
Brooklyn, NY 11221

Principal: Dominic Zagami

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

Lead Reviewer: Kevin Bradley
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. 377 Alejandrina B. De Gautier serves students in grade pre-kindergarten through grade eight. 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

### Instructional Core

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

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Area</th>
<th>Rating</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<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>
</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>
</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>
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</tbody>
</table>
### School Culture

<table>
<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>Additional Finding</td>
<td>Developing</td>
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<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>Developing</td>
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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>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>Area of Celebration</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>Developing</td>
</tr>
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</table>
Findings
The majority of teachers are engaged in grade-based teacher teams that meet to review curricula, differentiation strategies, as well as best practices and student work. Teacher teams consistently analyze data and student work for students they share.

Impact
Teachers’ collaborations have strengthened their instructional capacity. Teacher team work typically results in progress toward goals for groups of students.

Supporting Evidence
- An observed seventh grade inquiry team took a look at student writing. Each teacher brought examples of student writing pieces from their current argumentative and informative units on writing. The team used the argumentative writing rubric to assess the different pieces of student work. The teachers analyzed common trends, the findings were students were not meeting expectations in paraphrasing, introducing quotes, using textual evidence, and elaborating in their own words. The teachers reported out during the meeting that the use of technology through Microsoft Sway presentations, a digital storytelling application, has augmented class instruction and mini-lessons. The next step was to teach students Sway so they could use the technology on their own. The team agreed upon next steps and a plan of action, including creating a common rubric for writing stations in the classroom, designing mini-lessons for the next drafting session that addresses paraphrasing and a list of alternative words, and creating mini-lessons for capitalization and punctuation, run on sentences, and subject verb agreement. Teachers reported that the work of teams has improved student outcomes, “I noticed that using the strategy of the read alouds from this team has improved the quality of their writing. When they read it aloud, and they brought back the paper, there was a lot more edits and correction. They’re now asking to go out into the hallway and read it.”

- A fifth grade team looked at using domain specific vocabulary checklist and comparing and contrasting results of student rainforest essays. The team agreed to use checklist scoring for injustice essays and bring a copy of the results to the next meeting to continue the inquiry cycle from classroom instruction to student work products. The team also wanted to look at assessment to ensure modifications and adjustments were used to inform instruction and team level analysis. Another inquiry team looked at student work and analyzed informative essay performance. The outcomes were connected to a review of Writing Pathways resources and on-demand writing results. The teacher team decided that the implication for instruction was the creation of scaffolds to support student learning such as student friendly checklists and a review of the rubric for assessment of student writing. In addition, this team looked at opinion writing during another meeting and defined clear lesson objectives to guide adjustments to instruction to meet students’ learning needs. These included writing an introduction to get readers interested in the essay, effectively using transitional words and phrases, and grouping reasons and information into paragraph organization.

- Teachers have strengthened their instructional capacity through team collaborations. The seventh grade teacher team used the Danielson Framework for Teaching rubric to ensure that instruction includes highly effective practices centered on engagement of students. In addition, teachers spoke to how the work of the teacher teams has helped to improve their instructional practices, “When we are able to share ideas and best practices and see common trends in our student outcomes, the conversations lead to improved instructional planning, such as let’s try some vocabulary development strategies. This has improved our instructional work.”
### Area of Focus

<table>
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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 school leader’s instructional focus that is informed by the Danielson *Framework for Teaching*. Additionally, teaching practices inconsistently provide multiple entry points into the curricula.

**Impact**

Teaching practices across classrooms do not yet fully reflect the school leader’s beliefs about how students learn best. Teaching practices result in uneven student engagement in appropriately challenging tasks and demonstration of higher-order thinking skills by all learners.

**Supporting Evidence**

- The school leaders and faculty believes that students learn best when teacher thinking is made visible via modeling and students have opportunities to practice with teacher guidance and independently within small groups with their peers. During a sixth grade social studies class on Mesopotamia, the teacher gave clear directions and explanations. Students were sitting at stations: geography, government, social classes, economy, achievements, and religion. Students worked collaboratively with a group of their peers, as the teacher rotated between groups to conference with students about their understanding of the task. However, during a second grade reading lesson about how to identify the beginning and ending of the story, *Alexander, Who Used to Be Rich Last Sunday*. Students had trouble following along with the reading that the teacher was trying to engage them with and some students were on the wrong page. Students were looking to see what page they were on, as the teacher read the book without showing it to the students. One student responded to the teacher’s questions eight times during the fifteen minute classroom observation, limiting other students’ opportunities to respond. The lesson lacked strategies used to randomize speaking opportunities from students and any turns and talks for students to reflect on the reading or discuss their thoughts about the questions posed by the teacher with their peers.

- During a seventh grade math lesson, students were sitting in groups and writing in journals, with opportunities for conversations, peer assessment, and differentiated instruction through use of a paraprofessional along with manipulatives. In a fifth grade reading lesson about similes and metaphors, students were in three groups. The teacher rotated to groups, students were using a three column graphic organizer chart to help organize figurative language and similes. Another group was reading *The Cricket in Times Square*, where a student read to the teacher, as the teacher recorded running records. However, during a science lesson on plant cells and animal cells, students created a Venn diagram to track cell structures. All students completed the same assignment with no differentiation. The lesson lacked rigor as there was no extension activity or opportunity for students to proceed to the next task without losing instructional time waiting politely for the teacher to come and check their work and tell them what to do next.

- There were missed opportunities to engage all learners in challenging tasks and higher-order thinking. In an eighth grade math lesson about how to subtract numbers expressed in scientific notation, there were three table sets of students with six to five students each. Questioning from the teacher was not high order, “What was wrong with your work? You tell me,” and “Write everything that you know about multiplying and dividing exponents.” The lesson included no opportunities for student discussion, and lacked multiple entry points. In a sixth grade math lesson on how to represent percentages visually to help solve problems, teacher direction was unclear. During independent group time, after students repeatedly called out the teacher’s name because they were not sure what to do next, the teacher had to re-explain what students were expected to do.
Additional Finding

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

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

Impact

Unit and lesson plans inconsistently reflect alignment to the Common Core Learning Standards and integration of the instructional shifts. While some curricula documents reveal a growing practice of planning for diverse learners, a majority of curricula documents evidence an inconsistent focus on rigorous instruction for students of all levels.

Supporting Evidence

- Across classrooms there is a lack of cohesive curricula maps and unit plans. School leaders reported that multiple types of curricula are used across grade strands and content areas, and are augmented with other curricula pieces. However, documentation of the multiple curricula sources being merged to support alignment to the Common Core Learning Standards, integration of the instructional shifts, and rigorous instruction were lacking. School leaders admitted that many of the curricula sources were new to the school this year and the teacher teams and leaders were in the process of developing its documentation regarding curricula. Students reported that they felt the assignments they were asked to do were not that challenging and only felt challenged “sometimes.”

- The instructional shift that students support their arguments by citing textual evidence is evidence in some curricula documents. In a fourth grade reading lesson plan, students were to recall what they have read so far in *Fragile Frogs* as they look for evidence in the text to support the idea that it is challenging to keep amphibians safe. In a third grade reading lesson plan, students were to focus on seeking answers to research questions about a topic, using informational texts that describe how and why things occur in nature. In a fourth grade shared reading lesson plan, students are asked “What evidence in the text shows that Pecos Bill interacted with the cyclones as if it were a person?” However, not all curricula documents showed evidence of integration of instructional shifts across grades and content areas.

- A sixth grade social studies lesson plan contains specific scaffolds, differentiation, and extensions such as activating prior knowledge from a previous unit, having trade books available at various reading levels to assist students, and the use of purposeful student grouping including having English as a New Language (ENL) teacher support for English Language Learners (ELLs) and Integrated Co-Teaching (ICT) teacher support for students with disabilities, and a seventh grade math lesson plan indicated that students would be grouped into three different groups, an upper group, middle group, and lower group, each with a differentiated task and outcome. However, some lesson plans included inconsistent planning for providing diverse learners access to the curricula and tasks. For example, a seventh grade lesson plan lists scaffolds as a graphic organizer from notes may be used. Additionally, an eighth grade math lesson plan lists differentiation for two of three student groups as “worksheet” and makes no mention of tools and/or strategies to be used to ensure that rigorous content is emphasized for ELLs or students with disabilities.
Findings
Across classrooms, teachers use or create assessments, rubrics, and grading policies that are loosely aligned with the curricula. Teachers’ assessment practices inconsistently reflect the use of ongoing checks for understanding and student self-assessment.

Impact
Feedback to students regarding student achievement is inconsistent and limited. Teachers inconsistently utilize checks for understanding to modify instruction.

Supporting Evidence
- There was some evidence of teacher feedback on work provided by students during the student interview that contained specific comments related to grammatical errors and punctuation. One example of actionable feedback was: “You demonstrated an understanding of place value and multiplying 2-digit by 2-digit numbers. Next time, continue to use the area model strategy to help solve the problems,” and “You have some great ideas here. Next time work on expanding your ideas by thinking more deeply about the question, ‘What more can I say?’ For example, what problems would result from the population increasing so quickly?” However, much of the student work contained no feedback or feedback lacking enough clarity to effectively guide the student toward improvement.

- While the sixth grade social studies class had a specific rubric designed to assess student groups during a station rotation, rubrics were not seen in most other classes visited. During the student interview, students reported inconsistent use of rubrics, “Our social studies teacher likes to use rubrics; he would go over it in the class. We sometimes use a rubric in English Language Arts (ELA), but most teachers don’t have it.”

- Checks for understanding were inconsistently utilized during the classes observed. In some classes teachers circulated throughout the room to check-in with students at times during the lesson, although this practice did not occur across a majority of classes. In some classes, questions were asked to the whole class and sometimes a choral response from some of the students occurred, and at other times, a few students would respond without any clear indication if the entire class understood the correct answer. There was also limited evidence of student self-assessment or peer-assessment.
Additional Finding

<table>
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<th>Quality Indicator:</th>
<th>3.4 High Expectations</th>
<th>Rating:</th>
<th>Developing</th>
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**Findings**

School leaders and staff are developing expectations that are connected to college and career readiness. Teacher teams are developing a culture for learning that communicates high expectations for all students.

**Impact**

Teachers utilize online application systems to share students’ grades and academic progress with families. Feedback and guidance supports are developing the level of detail and clarity needed to help prepare students for the next level.

**Supporting Evidence**

- The school leaders distribute progress reports four times a year to families. Parents spoke about teacher use of applications such as ClassDoJo and Remind to keep them informed of student academic progress. Parents also shared that teachers provide feedback through report cards and by attending parent-teacher conferences. Parents reported that they would like to see more communication from the school to the parents. Supports for high expectations for students include an afterschool program on Wednesdays and Thursdays. A parent mentioned, “My daughter had a problem in reading and reached out and asked questions, and got help from the afterschool tutoring.” One parent reported about how a teacher had worked with her to support her child, “She helped me out with math and I could help my son.” Another parent reported how her daughter has grown at the school, “She called me, crying ’I just don’t know what to do,’ because she was struggling with her grades. Now her grades have all gone up, she’s all A’s now. For this school, from teachers and administration, you have to do your leg work.”

- Teacher teams and staff make students aware of their reading level. One student reported, “I’m in level O already, my teacher tells us what we need to do to be a P, Q, R.” Students spoke about teachers giving them work for the next grade level sometimes to help prepare them for the next level, “I’m in sixth grade, there’s a lesson about cells, this can help us for seventh grade.” The guidance counselor offers workshops on such topics as completing the high school application. Two students at the student interview spoke about preparing for the Specialized High School Admissions Tests (SHSAT) and working with the school’s guidance counselor to study the math needed to pursue their dream of attending a specialized high school. “They prepare us for college automatically.”

- Teacher comments on a student’s middle school progress report included, “I would like to schedule a conference, but do not have a contact phone # [number]. [The student] is always on his phone or talking, and does very little work. He could do much better.” This type of limited feedback and guidance does not provide the clear and structured support students need to be prepared for the next level and beyond.
Additional Finding

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

Findings

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

Impact

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

Supporting Evidence

- School leaders conduct frequent classroom observations and provide feedback utilizing the Danielson *Framework for Teaching*. Each rated item is supported with specific evidence from the observed class. Next steps for teaching improvements are included throughout the class-specific evidence and at the close of each observation report. In addition, school leaders discussed a strategy of observation cycle planning that targets teachers based on individual need as well as student need. Teachers reported on the impact of observations on their growth as professionals, “It makes you very aware of the components of your lesson plan and using the data and making yourself a better teacher. I think it's made an improvement on my teaching and my lessons.”

- Observation reports contain feedback that captures teachers' strengths and weaknesses and is accompanied by next steps teachers should take in order to improve their practice and impact student success. For example, one observation report included, “Please continue to ensure that your classroom library, and student independent reading is aligned with best practices identified in *Reading with Power and Passion*. In another observation report, the principal praised the teacher, “The students were all active during the Socratic seminar. Now our goal is to ensure that there are opportunities during instructional periods, in all content areas, for students to engage in high level thoughtful conversations, especially math. The book *Making Thinking Visible*, by Ron Ritchhart, Mark Church, and Karin Morrison offer specific thinking routines that students can engage in to make their thinking visible to their peers. I will work with you during instructional planning time to assist you with incorporating these routines into instructional time.” Other observations included feedback that detailed areas of growth with specific references to what needs to be done to be rated effective or highly effective in specific identified Danielson *Framework for Teaching* components that needed improvement and another observation included, “Please ensure that student work on display is current and contains meaningful teacher feedback including a “glow” something the student did well, and a “grow” something specific that the student can work on to improve their work.”

- In addition to the feedback resulting from official classroom observations with specific next steps, the principal and assistant principal give feedback to teachers encouraging them to participate in intervisitations for peer support. For example, in one such feedback the principal wrote about utilizing a peer for support with classroom environment, lending library, and ELA instructional best practices. The principal went on to note that he had setup a time for a peer support visit to the teacher’s classroom to observe guided reading instruction in action. In another feedback, the principal shared, “As we discussed during our post-visit conversations, we want to support our students’ conversations by providing them with conversational prompts and discussion techniques,” and goes on to set a specific date for a classroom intervisitation with a peer to observe her students in Socratic Seminar.