Quality Review Report

2016-2017

Christopher Avenue Community School

Elementary 23K401

51 Christopher Ave.
Brooklyn
NY 11212

Principal: Deon Mitchell

Dates of Review:
January 24, 2017 - January 25, 2017

Lead Reviewer: Marion Wilson
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

Christopher Avenue Community School 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

### Instructional Core

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>To what extent does the school...</th>
<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>
<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>
</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>Additional Finding</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>
</tr>
</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>Well Developed</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3.1 Establish a coherent vision of school improvement that is reflected in a short list of focused, data-based goals that are tracked for progress and are understood and supported by the entire school community</td>
<td>Additional Finding</td>
<td>Proficient</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4.1 Observe teachers using the Danielson Framework for Teaching along with the analysis of learning outcomes to elevate school-wide instructional practices and implement strategies that promote professional growth and reflection</td>
<td>Area of Celebration</td>
<td>Well Developed</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4.2 Engage in structured professional collaborations on teams using an inquiry approach that promotes shared leadership and focuses on improved student learning</td>
<td>Additional Finding</td>
<td>Proficient</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5.1 Evaluate the quality of school-level decisions, making adjustments as needed to increase the coherence of policies and practices across the school, with particular attention to the CCLS</td>
<td>Additional Finding</td>
<td>Proficient</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Area of Celebration

| Quality Indicator: | 4.1 Teacher Support and Supervision | Rating: | Well Developed |

Findings

School leaders and teacher leaders provide feedback through informal and formal observations through strategically planned cycles. Teachers’ professional goals are tracked and monitored in feedback aligned to the Danielson Framework for Teaching.

Impact

Teacher growth is supported by effective feedback and purposeful next steps, which includes an analysis of student work samples and assessment data. Meaningful feedback is helping to improve teachers’ Advance ratings between observations and is aligned to their professional goals.

Supporting Evidence

- School leaders, lead teachers, and the instructional coach use low inference and focused observations to capture strengths and challenges of a teacher’s pedagogy practice. There are teacher feedback logs, which indicate the data, support given and follow up. There are whole school instructional walkthroughs aligned to Danielson Framework for Teaching components 1a, 1e, and 3d. Verbal and/or written feedback is provided to each teacher within a reasonable timeframe. New teachers are teamed up with a veteran teacher to support them and prep schedules are coordinated to ensure that mentor teachers have opportunities to visit new teachers and offer feedback. There is a written plan for follow-up, which includes practice with another teacher or an administrator.

- Support for teachers and staff is based on an analysis of student work products, as well as teacher data. Each teacher has written professional goals and related learning experiences that are structured around the Danielson Framework for Teaching and results in improved teacher practice and student progress. There is a robust teacher observation schedule, which includes both the principal and assistant principal visiting teachers simultaneously and then norming and calibrating their ratings to ensure coherence within observations. As part of the school’s practice, it is customary during the post observation conference for teachers to self-evaluate themselves and analyze the results of the work produced by students during the visit. The schedule incorporates teachers’ options for visits in addition to non-evaluative frequent classroom visits at least three times per learning cycle. During teacher team meetings, teachers shared that they receive clear next steps based on their areas of growth, as well as, follow up and support visits within a one-week time frame.

- The ongoing cycle of focused observation of classroom practice and follow-up push in support leads to teachers’ better understanding their strengths and challenges to incorporate next steps. As a result, there is improved student outcomes and classroom practice. Feedback reports are accompanied by a tool the school created which captures the learning target, standards being addressed and how many students have either met, or are approaching or are below standards based on the lesson. Suggestions for improvements are also shared with a follow-up date for professional learning or coaching. Each teacher has a professional development and improvement plan. For example, one plan stated the teacher’s goal was to better incorporate and implement effective literacy strategies into everyday classroom practice. Her observation report included feedback that stated, “Since students struggled with many sophisticated words in your lesson, create a chart with complex words specific to the text with illustrations to aid understanding, tell a story, and describe your own mental picture of the term to help them make meaning.” The plan included visiting another teacher who demonstrated proficiency in this area. The plan also indicated who would facilitate the training, either coach or another teacher, and then the date for which this should be accomplished.
Findings

Across classrooms teaching strategies inconsistently provide multiple entry points, scaffolds, or supports for all learners. There are uneven levels of student engagement and participation across classrooms.

Impact

Teaching strategies do not always incorporate support for all learners, including English Language Learners (ELLs) and students with disabilities to complete projects or activities independently. There were missed opportunities for student-to-student discourse and for students to take ownership of their learning.

Supporting Evidence

- In some classes, there were instructional groups that were organized by student strength, weaknesses, and performance levels. Some activities were well structured with appropriate resources, pacing, and timing of the lesson activities so students could support each other to complete the task. For example, in a science class visited, the learning target was to use light to create a diorama showing how information is sent around the world via satellite. The lesson was student centered in that students generated their own questions to each other. Students with disabilities were engaged in the lesson and had resource materials available to assist them. Laptops were present to help students conduct research. The teacher circulated throughout the room and acted as a facilitator asking probing questions as students engaged in an inquiry approach. Students shared that they played games in the technology lab the day before and were now able to make predictions and apply their learning in the science lab. These types of activities were not consistent across most classrooms or grades.

- Teachers implemented teaching strategies and instructional tasks that addressed the needs of individual students including ELLs and students with disabilities so they could demonstrate multiple means of expression, engagement, and representation. Some teachers provide students with challenging learning tasks that required them to use critical thinking and problem solving but this is not evident across most classrooms. For example, in one math class, students had to add and subtract within twenty by figuring out which strategies would help them to solve the problem and provide an explanation. Students had ten frames, two-colored counters, crayons, and labeled math vocabulary charts to assist them. Students were separated into guided groups after the teacher observed some students were struggling to explain their resources. In other classes, there were missed opportunities for some students to engage in the lesson.

- There were missed opportunities for students to engage in discussions that reflect higher order thinking skills, show creativity, or innovation or problem solve throughout the learning process. There was varied student-to-student dialogue in classes where students could articulate what they were working towards and why it was important. In a lower grade reading class, the teacher read aloud the story to students. The class was teacher-centered as the target of the lesson was for students to use illustrations to help them understand the characters and plot of a story. Students were unable to answer the teacher’s questions and were stuck even after the teacher modeled for them. Most questions asked were recall and low level, which only a few select students were able to respond to with much teacher prompting.
## Additional Finding

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

Curricula documents are stored online, accessible to all teachers, and are aligned to the Common Core Learning Standards and content standards, as well as the instructional shifts. Rigorous habits and higher-order thinking skills are identified and incorporated within curricula and academic tasks across most grades and subjects.

### Impact

Pacing calendars, lesson, and unit plans are planned to allow a diversity of students access to the curricula aligned to the Common Core. Tasks consistently emphasize higher-order thinking skills based on Webb’s Depth of Knowledge (DOK) for ELLs and students with disabilities.

### Supporting Evidence

- There are pacing calendars, unit, and lesson plans, which integrate the instructional shifts within subject areas and align them to the standards to build coherence across grades. Each grade level has power standards identified for focus in both reading and math. Most lesson plans include the same agreed upon format to incorporate learning targets based on the standards and written in student friendly language. Across grades, teachers are focused on responses to literature and informational texts where students should refer explicitly to the text for answers, determine main ideas, and describe relationships. For math, plans require students to interpret products, understand division word problems, and solve two-step word problems using four operations. Most lesson plan formatting is consistent throughout all grades and subjects and includes an area for the priority standards, focus of the lesson, learning target, activities, essential question, math skills, vocabulary, resources that will be used and an assessment checklist. Science and social studies units are taken from the scope and sequence and address the standards appropriate for all grade levels.

- Written curricula documents incorporate rigorous habits and higher order thinking tasks that require students, including ELLs and students with disabilities, to identify perspectives, problem solve, and engage in debates. Scaffolds and strategic supports for students include using supplemental materials from the online resource entitled, Learning A-Z, providing anchor charts for students, using graphic organizers aligned to the task for ELLs. Lesson plans incorporate strategies for teachers and students to act out words using a total physical response routine and create a bank of words that describe emotions with pictures to help them understand angry, sad, and happy. For math unit plans, tasks require students to create models, respond to essential questions, and write to explain their thinking. Math tasks have sentence starters and include number lines to assist students with problem solving.

- Curricula tasks across most grades and subjects challenge students to think critically with written plans to differentiate lessons through the process, product, and content where most timed activities require students to demonstrate their thinking. Modifications include providing tiered questions, vocabulary lists for students, multiple means of representation such as oral and electronic presentations, clay models, posters, panoramas, and collections. To support multiple entry points, academic tasks highlight key words in the directions for students, allow students to utilize whiteboards, math boards, number lines, counting tape and reference charts when solving problems. Teachers write lesson plans to provide students numerous opportunities to solve problems using the strategy to make a model and then write to explain why they chose to use one strategy over another one.
Additional Finding

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

Findings

Teachers use and create assessment tools that are aligned to the school's curricula. The school uses running records and chapter tests to determine student progress towards individual student reading and math goals.

Impact

Rubrics, quizzes, and performance tasks provide actionable feedback to both teachers and students on student performance. The results from chapter tests are used to adjust small groups and lesson plans.

Supporting Evidence

- Teachers and school leaders utilize assessments for all core content areas that provide data on student performance on a regular basis. There is an assessment calendar that provides for multiple opportunities for the administering of Fountas and Pinnell (F&P) running records and Dynamic Indicators for Basic Early Literacy Skills (DIBELS) tests for students at risk of failing reading in grades kindergarten to second grade. In addition, teachers create their own beginning of the year, middle of the year, and end of year exams for all grades according to targeted standards in math and reading. Teachers modify common grade-wide assessments and tailor rubrics to be curriculum-aligned. Teachers also use the results from these various assessment tools to track the progress of individual and groups of students across grades for math and reading. Problem solving rubrics for a first grade task, included colors, pictures, numbers, and student friendly criteria for work. Most students in classes and during student meetings were able to articulate the reasoning for their grades and what areas they needed to improve upon using language from the rubric. The categories for performance were limited, progressing, and successful.

- Teachers analyze assessment data in relation to students' learning goals. The results from informal assessment data are used to update lesson plans and change the configuration of guided small group instruction. There is a data driven form that teachers must complete. Information includes the identified areas for improvement based on assessment data, the action plan, and how progress will be measured. The school uses an online monitoring tool to get weekly reports about student performance which in turn helps them analyze the effectiveness and efficiency of their teaching practices and make the needed modifications to lessons. DIBELS and Fountas and Pinnell data revealed how students are progressing in relation to the standards between round one and round two of data collection cycles. As a result, there were more students approaching or tested as being on grade level. Progress monitoring for the group of students being monitored by all teachers, also indicated a decrease in the number of students between the beginning of the year and the middle of the year who were reading significantly below level.

- Teacher teams design formative assessments to measure student progress in relation to Common Core-aligned learning targets in the form of “I can” statements. Math and English Language Arts (ELA) simulated data is broken down into color-coded sheets to indicate students and their performance levels. Each teacher is responsible for a core group of students that they must use multiple measures of data to track their progress. The results from the chapter tests for social studies helps teachers adjust learning activities.
Additional Finding

**Quality Indicator:** 3.4 High Expectations  
**Rating:** Proficient

**Findings**

School leaders communicate high expectations about professionalism, communication, and instruction to staff through weekly emails, a staff handbook, and face-to-face meetings. Families partner with the school and receive ongoing communication about their children connected to a path of college and career readiness.

**Impact**

Teachers receive training and professional development to help support their achievement of the expectations and are held accountable for achieving them. Families understand the criteria for how students are graded and can support their children in achieving reading goals.

**Supporting Evidence**

- School leaders communicate expectations to staff about what to teach and how to teach. These expectations are shared verbally through informal conversations, in the staff handbook, and via weekly emails from the leadership team. The school's handbook for staff begins with a quote from Alexandra K. Trenor which states, “The best teachers are those who show you where to look, but don’t tell you what to see.” This is in alignment with the school's expectations that more teachers act as facilitators and shift away from direct instruction models to the whole class. It also incorporates more inquiry based and investigatory learning experiences for students. Teachers are expected to implement effective classroom practices based on the school's instructional focus to provide data driven instruction while utilizing technology resources to enhance the workshop model in all classes. Teachers shared that these expectations are clear and consistently communicated to them and they try to ensure that they are complying.

- School leaders have established a set of criteria for classroom practices, which is aligned to the Danielson Framework for Teaching that most teachers follow which reflects high expectations for lesson planning and small group instruction. Beliefs about how students learn best drives expectations for classroom activities which should be student centered, in an inquiry based environment, allowing opportunities to investigate, explore, and research ideas and concepts that will further their understanding of the world around them. The Peer Collaborative Teacher (PCT) supports administration to further develop teachers’ knowledge of pedagogy and skill base, and promote a collaborative environment for further professional learning and growth. During a teacher team meeting, teachers remarked that this ongoing support is impacting teaching and learning across the school. The professional development lab is a center for resources and a place for teachers to find the necessary tools to implement effective strategies into their classrooms.

- The school has a parent handbook, which is accessible online for parents, that most parents are familiar with and spoke about during the parent meeting. Staff members share information with parents including flyers, notices and letters regarding projects, homework, classroom, and student participation to ensure students will be on track to meet stated expectations. The school sends home messages to families via an online communication tool that provides grades for behavior and student performance in class. During the parent meeting, parents shared that they receive progress reports three times per year and informs them on how their children are doing in core subject areas before report cards are sent home. Parents marveled at “Talk to Me Tuesday” sessions that are held every week which allows them to visit with the teacher and view their children’s work and assignments. Learning leaders’ programs provide training for parents to help them provide individualized support to further their child’s educational development.
Findings
The majority of teachers engage in structured, inquiry-based collaborations on a weekly basis. Teachers have a voice in key decisions that affect student learning across the school.

Impact
There are grade level leaders and coaches in place to help ensure that work is focused on improving student learning and that teachers have a voice in key decisions. Teacher teams consistently review and analyze student assessment data, which is resulting in teachers improving their guided group instructional practices and students improving their reading levels.

Supporting Evidence

- Teacher teams utilize varied protocols for looking at student work to analyze the information to inform their next steps in teaching. Teacher teams focus on the instructional shifts to help promote growth for most learners for reading and writing. Inquiry teams look at writing tasks and use this information to review curricula across most grades and content areas and make adjustments as needed. During the teacher team observation meeting, each teacher had the opportunity to discuss the glows and grows for their selected students’ informational writing samples. The team was able to share the difference between students’ writing in different genres over time noting improvement in areas based on suggested research based strategies and the refinement of the rubric. Teachers shared that they previously implemented the use of different graphic organizers geared to meet the needs of their students. Teachers discussed the improvement of student performance on the writing tasks in relation to their improvement in reading level due largely in part to the focused guided reading and writing instruction.

- School leaders and teachers articulated that grade level leaders are responsible for sharing and turn-keying information to their team members after attending professional learning sessions. Teachers are offered the opportunity to come in over the summer to help plan curricula and design learning activities. During the question and answer session, teachers shared that it was their suggestion to agree upon a common lesson planning template format and to put curricula online so that everyone could access the grade level above and below. Teachers lead themselves in common planning efforts and shared that this work is supported by administration.

- During teacher team meetings, teachers shared that there are opportunities for teachers to share in key decisions that affect student learning. For example, teachers can choose to serve on the instructional cabinet, hiring committees, and make recommendations for the school use of instructional resources. Newly assigned cluster teachers and peer coaches were once classroom teachers and now help to support administration in making decisions about student placement, teacher assignments, the use of instructional materials, and provide quasi-leadership functions to promote positive student outcomes.