Quality Review Report

2016-2017

P.S. 129 John H. Finley
K-8 05M129
425 West 130th St.
Manhattan
NY 10027

Principal: Odelphia Pierre

Dates of Review:
January 12, 2017 - January 13, 2017

Lead Reviewer: Debra Tasioudis
The Quality Review Report

The Quality Review is a two-day school visit by an experienced educator. During the review, the reviewer visits classrooms, talks with parents, students, teachers, and school leaders and uses a rubric to evaluate how well the school is organized to support student achievement.

The Quality Review Report provides a rating for all ten indicators of the Quality Review Rubric in three categories: Instructional Core, School Culture, and Systems for Improvement. One indicator is identified as the **Area of Celebration** to highlight an area in which the school does well to support student learning and achievement. One indicator is identified as the **Area of Focus** to highlight an area the school should work on to support student learning and achievement. The remaining indicators are identified as **Additional Finding**. This report presents written findings, impact, and site-specific supporting evidence for six indicators.

Information about the School


School Quality Ratings

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Instructional Core</th>
<th>Area</th>
<th>Rating</th>
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</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>Developing</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 Celebration</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>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>Additional Finding</td>
<td>Developing</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3.4 Establish a culture for learning that communicates high expectations to staff, students and families, and provide supports to achieve those expectations</td>
<td>Additional Finding</td>
<td>Developing</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>Developing</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>Developing</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>Developing</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 Focus</td>
<td>Developing</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>Developing</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Findings

Across classrooms, teaching practices are becoming aligned to the school’s beliefs that students learn best through explicit teacher modeling, small group activities, teacher-facilitated project-based learning, and student-to-student discussions. Teachers are creating opportunities for students to work collaboratively in groups with varying levels of student thinking and participation.

Impact

Teaching practices are providing more opportunities for students to participate in small group discussions and, in some classrooms, students are producing meaningful student work products.

Supporting Evidence

- Teaching practices are becoming aligned to the school’s belief that students learn best when the teacher serves as the facilitator, with students learning from one another in group work. In five of the nine classrooms visited, students worked together in small groups with varying levels of autonomy and rigor. In two of the classes, students were able to take ownership of their learning. In a social studies lesson about community rules, the teacher prepared the task and questions for students ahead of time, allowing for students to spend most of the period engaged in collaborative learning together. In a science class, students worked in small groups to explore surfaces in the classroom and discover how magnets work, keeping a journal of their findings. In other classes, students sat together in groups but engaged in teacher-led instruction, or completed low-level tasks which required little student thinking or creation of student writing. There were several missed opportunities for students to write about their thinking, as observed in several math classes and an English Language Arts (ELA) class where students were given an argument in favor or against homework in school and asked only to discuss, without conducting any research of their own or engaging in writing. Attempts at meaningful group work are growing, and effective models of teacher-facilitated instruction are increasing across the school community.

- Explicit teacher modeling for students before they engaged in independent or group work was an expressed belief about how students learn best that was present in several classes and in the majority of math classes visited. In a third grade math class, the teacher modeled a strategy that students could use to multiply by five or ten. She modeled the strategy, and then thought aloud for students to make the process clear before sending them off to practice in small groups. In a social studies class, the teacher modeled a timeline for the whole group and left it up as an example before sending students off to work independently. These examples demonstrate growth in the school’s belief that students learn best when teachers create models to guide student thinking before independent or group practice.

- Student discussions are beginning to reflect even levels of student thinking and participation. As an example, in a lower-grade gifted and talented class, students worked in small groups to discuss the importance of community rules in prepared activities that gave the questions over to groups to discuss, independent of the teacher. In five of the other classrooms visits, discussions lacked protocols for participation, appropriate rigor for the grade and demonstrated very few examples of meaningful text-based conversations. Students in a sixth grade class were asked to work with a partner to complete an independent task of transferring information from a textbook to a graphic organizer. Students had no guiding questions or guidance for what partnered talk should include and students self-selected their seats and partners, creating a missed opportunity for rigorous inquiry or a meaningful exchange of ideas. There were two students that only spoke Arabic and a few who spoke Arabic and English. Those students were not paired together, leaving the two of the students in the class without access to the text or the discussion.
Findings
While teachers articulate that they feel supported by one another through structured, professional collaborations, teachers are not yet engaged in structured inquiry-based collaboration that results in improved teacher practice or progress toward goals for groups of students.

Impact
An inquiry approach is developing across teams, and as such, teams are beginning to measure the efficacy of new teaching strategies put in place or progress toward goals for groups of students.

Supporting Evidence

- Teachers are clearly engaged in professional learning on teams, sometimes on grade level teams. Some teacher teams meet weekly, such as some common planning teams and other teams, like the School Implementation Team (SIT), meet monthly. Agendas from meetings of various teams demonstrate common agenda items, such as lesson planning, discussion of curricula units of study, pacing and bulletin board displays, demonstrating teacher work that is loosely connected to the school’s goals. One teacher shared that her grade level team meets weekly and discusses where they are in the curriculum, difficulties with lessons or students and ways to improve lessons. While teachers were able to speak to feeling very supported by their peers through common planning, and some even spoke of feeling more welcome into other teachers’ classrooms as a result of common planning, none articulated a structured inquiry-based collaboration that promotes the achievement of school goals and the implementation of the Common Core Learning Standards and instructional shifts.

- Review of the SIT team’s records demonstrates the most structured of the school’s professional collaborations. The team meets monthly and has an action plan and goals set around moving students to a less restrictive environment (LRE), improving writing Individualized Education Plans (IEPs) and ensuring that student goals are aligned to the Common Core. While agendas demonstrate teamwork on IEP development, records of students at the meetings demonstrate time spent on students needing behavior interventions and additional academic supports, rather than students identified for movement to a less restrictive environment. While it is clear that this team is focused on improving teacher practice, particularly for those who engage in IEP writing as demonstrated through improved IEP goals and behavior plans, the team’s work does not yet result in progress toward goals for groups of students.

- The middle school teacher team meets every Friday, follows an agenda, and provides a forum for teachers to share practices with one another. During a meeting, a teacher served as the facilitator for the group, reviewing their discussion from the previous week and opening up a discussion about how their students are doing in citing evidence from text. While teachers report that they have been focused on the how students cite evidence from the text for several months, teachers have yet to identify a common strategy or set of strategies to promote improved student achievement. Several teachers bring student work samples to share, and teachers share strategies that they are currently trying in their classrooms. There is also discussion about the need for a common strategy across the subject areas. Teachers decided to come up with a common strategy or anchor chart the following week before moving on to the topic of reading stamina. While this demonstrates teacher collaboration and some discussion of student work, it does not yet demonstrate a consistent inquiry approach.
## 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 the Common Core. The focus on deep contextual understanding in math and citing evidence from the text in literacy are inconsistently embedded in that curricula. Rigorous habits and higher-order skills are inconsistently emphasized across curricula.

### Impact

There is a lack of coherence across grades and subjects that undermines progress towards readiness for groups of students. In addition, access to the curricula for all learners, including English language learners (ELLs) and students with disabilities, is not consistently provided.

### Supporting Evidence

- School leaders and teachers are still in the process of aligning the curricula to the Common Core. Some lesson plans are misaligned to standards or aligned to the standards at lower grades. The school’s articulated focus on two instructional shifts, deep understanding in mathematics and citing textual evidence across the content areas, was found in a few lesson plans but not as a focus in the curriculum maps across grades and subject areas. Curriculum maps across the school also lacked consistency in their level of detail, in some cases highlighting learning targets and alignment to the Common Core standards, and in other cases not. Fourth and fifth grade English Language Arts (ELA) and math unit overviews demonstrate a refined focus on just a few standards for each unit, while kindergarten through third grade maps did not. While some grade level science and social studies units demonstrated clear attention to the development of essential questions, others did not, demonstrating inconsistencies in alignment to the Common Core and the instructional shifts.

- Curriculum maps inconsistently emphasized rigor for ELLs and for students with disabilities. Occasionally strategies and supports for students were included in unit plans but overall, the unit planning templates did not ask teachers to include them. In lesson plans, academic tasks inconsistently emphasize rigorous habits and higher-order skills across grades. There were several instances in ELA, math and science plans where students were not asked to engage in higher-level questioning or writing from sources in a way that asked them to evaluate the text or make arguments. While some lesson plans included specific supports for students with disabilities and ELLs, like purposeful review or use of a number line to skip count, others made no mention of different groups of learners or rigor for students.

- In an effort to engage more students in deep contextual understanding in math, the school is beginning to institute a problem of the day with the intent to engage students in math word problem solving and to illicit deep contextual understanding. While the problem of the day does arm students with a simple, four-step strategy for problem solving, it does not ask students to explain their mathematical thinking, creating a missed opportunity to engage students in the work of the instructional shift of focus. It is also unclear how the school is working to build coherence across the grades and subject areas in the school’s articulated focus on interdisciplinary work.
Additional Finding

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

Teachers administer an abundance of common assessments; however, they are inconsistently used to make adjustments to curricula and instruction. Across classrooms, teachers’ assessment practices inconsistently reflect the use of ongoing checks for understanding and student self-assessment.

Impact

Teachers inconsistently use the analysis of common assessments, whether district-wide, online or end-of-unit to adjust curricula and instruction. In-the-moment adjustments to meet the learning needs of students is inconsistent across classrooms.

Supporting Evidence

- There are many common assessments in place across grades to measure student progress in ELA and math, such as the curricula's baseline, end-of-chapter and end-of-unit assessments, *Accelerated Reader*, mock New York State exams administered in ELA and math to grades three through eight, and teacher-created writing benchmarks. However, it is unclear how teachers are using these assessments to make adjustments to curricula and instruction. The district-wide baseline assessment was used by classroom teachers to prioritize some learning standards at the beginning of the year, as was *Accelerated Reader* but other adjustments beyond the beginning of the year were not evident. In some grades, the baseline assessments are informing areas of focus in instruction, though it is not clear how the curricula are being changed to make those adjustments.

- Several of the assessments, such as the ReadyGen end-of-unit performance tasks, multiple-choice exams and the mock state tests provide very similar data on student performance, though little of it is analyzed across grades and subject areas. The school leader reported that the school used to have a data specialist who helped teachers to look at data across the grade and to make sense of class item analysis but the position no longer exists. Grade teams are not yet fully analyzing data on student performance, limiting the progress toward goals across grades and subject areas.

- The use of ongoing checks for understanding in classrooms is primarily done through teacher questioning to the whole class or to individual students, thus missing opportunities to gather feedback to meet student need. In a few classrooms, the teacher questioned students to clarify their thinking, as observed in a third grade math class, and in another, a teacher pulled a small group to work with after the whole group instruction. In many classrooms, there were missed opportunities to harness the power of adults in the room to make adjustments to instruction, whether it be a second teacher in an Integrated Co-Teaching (ICT) class, or a paraprofessional who stood by as a teacher provided whole class instruction. Although students reported that they sometimes check their own work for punctuation and editing, student self-assessment was not observed in the classrooms.
Additional Finding

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

School leaders consistently communicate high expectations to the entire staff, and are developing training and a system of accountability for those expectations. School leaders and staff are developing expectations connected to a path of college and career readiness, as well as a system for communicating student progress toward those expectations to families.

Impact

While the school has non-negotiables in place, this has not yet resulted in a system of mutual accountability amongst staff. In addition, as expectations are loosely connected to a path of college and career readiness, there are missed opportunities for families to understand goals and to be able to partner with the school to support students as they work towards those goals.

Supporting Evidence

- The school leaders have put non-negotiables in place for staff, about topics such as homework, the use of rubrics for every activity, communicating with parents on Tuesdays, and dressing and speaking professionally. There are also some instructional non-negotiables for staff about what is expected in regards to curriculum and instruction, but they are vague rather than specific and actionable. For example, one non-negotiable for staff is that, “Teachers use research-based and effective instruction that yields high quality student work.” Daily bulletins are also shared with staff every morning that communicate assessment deadlines and other reminders to staff; however, in the half-dozen observed, none made mention of any instructional expectations or of expectations around communicating with families.

- School leaders expressed that Monday professional learning time and classrooms visits are the main driver of accountability for their expectations, but classroom observation records inconsistently provide teachers with next steps and clarity of strategies that are connected to the Danielson Framework for Teaching or the school’s beliefs about how students learn best. While teacher observations were noted as the main driver of holding teachers accountable for these expectations, school records also show that, with the exception of one teacher, teachers had only been observed once. Feedback to teachers was solely about the observed lesson and feedback did not connect back to schoolwide expectations.

- The school has created its own progress reports that are shared three times a year in an attempt to address student’s academic progress and the development of college ready behaviors such as attentiveness, motivation, attitude toward learning and timeliness with homework. However, the progress reports lack connection to Common Core and instructional shifts and there is little specificity about the behaviors of college and career readiness. Progress reports provide student ratings in ELA, math, science, social studies, art or music and physical education as either proficient, satisfactory, needs improvement or unsatisfactory. Some teachers used provided space to write about students’ performance, writing comments such as “spotty work ethic,” “needs to focus more,” or “cuts class.” While these comments are somewhat informative, they do not provide instruction on skills, standards or behavior strategies that students are meeting or need to improve in to ensure that students are ready for college and career. Combined with a lack of online grades, parents articulated the progress reports and Tuesdays, if they could make it to school, as the main communication from the school about their child’s success.
Findings
School leaders support the development of teachers with infrequent cycles of observation that make some connections to student work, and with feedback that sometimes captures strengths and next steps and that is aligned to the Danielson Framework for Teaching. School leaders are beginning to use observation data to design and facilitate professional learning.

Impact
Observations, feedback and professional learning practices are beginning to elevate schoolwide instructional practices and promote professional growth for teachers.

Supporting Evidence
- Cycles of classroom observation by the principal and assistant principal are infrequent, for all teachers, including those new to the profession. While the school leader and principal articulated that they “intermingle” among teachers in deciding who to observe, at the time of the review, the assistant principal had observed forty-one teachers and the principal, significantly less. Most of the teachers in the school had only been observed once in the first four months of school. Feedback to teachers rarely included analysis of student work or data connected to the lesson or other assessment data. Teachers and administrators reported that sometimes feedback happens through a collaborative conversation between an administrator and a teacher, other times, the teacher receives an email with feedback after the classroom observation. Early childhood teachers shared that they had not been observed by school leaders, only outside coaches.

- Feedback to teachers does not consistently capture strengths, challenges and next steps and does not always align to the Danielson Framework for Teaching. In one observation report, the teacher was given an effective rating for using assessment in instruction, and given clear low inference notes on the questions she asked, and praise for their increasing complexity in eliciting understanding from students. In another sample of written feedback to a teacher, the teacher was rated as effective and highly effective across domain components, with no feedback or next steps beyond praising the students for being articulate. Records show that another teacher was observed by the principal and the assistant principal nine days apart without continuity or clear connections to the Danielson Framework for Teaching. In the first observation, feedback to the teacher encouraged the teacher to take the students outside to explore the environment or create group tasks with manipulatives. In the second observation just days later, the administrator rated the planning of the lesson as ineffective and only noted that the lesson was “boring,” without any additional feedback or next steps to the teacher to promote improvement in teaching strategies or professional learning. While some feedback to teachers accurately captures strengths and articulates clear expectations, others are not yet fully connected to the Danielson Framework for Teaching, and are thus only beginning to support teacher development.

- School leaders are still developing ways to fully connect professional learning opportunities to observation feedback. Teachers set professional learning goals, though they do not appear to be aligned with the school’s professional learning plans. Teachers articulated that they were afforded opportunities to seek out professional learning at the field support center or participate in city-wide professional learning and records reflect their participation. Internal professional learning planning shows that teachers are afforded time to share promising practices with peers, though most professional learning centered around assessment administration and mandated topics with little time spent on the Danielson Framework for Teaching or the implementation of specific instructional strategies. There were no discussions or evidence of succession planning.