Quality Review Report

2016-2017

Sixth Avenue Elementary School

Elementary 02M340

590 Sixth Ave.
Manhattan
NY 10011

Principal: Patricia Carney

Dates of Review:
April 4, 2017 - April 5, 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

Sixth Avenue Elementary School serves students in grade PK through grade 2. 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>To what extent does the school...</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>Well Developed</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1.2 Develop teacher pedagogy from a coherent set of beliefs about how students learn best that is informed by the instructional shifts and Danielson Framework for Teaching, aligned to the curricula, engaging, and meets the needs of all learners so that all students produce meaningful work products</td>
<td>Additional Finding</td>
<td>Proficient</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2.2 Align assessments to curricula, use on-going assessment and grading practices, and analyze information on student learning outcomes to adjust instructional decisions at the team and classroom levels</td>
<td>Area of Focus</td>
<td>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>Area of Celebration</td>
<td>Well Developed</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>Well Developed</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>Additional Finding</td>
<td>Proficient</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4.2 Engage in structured professional collaborations on teams using an inquiry approach that promotes shared leadership and focuses on improved student learning</td>
<td>Additional Finding</td>
<td>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>
Findings
The school’s approach to culture-building, discipline, and social-emotional support is informed by a theory of action. The school community strategically aligns professional development, family outreach, and student learning experiences and supports.

Impact
The school’s safe environment and inclusive culture supports progress toward the school’s goals; the school meaningfully involves student voice in decision-making to initiate, guide, and lead school improvement efforts resulting in the adoption of effective academic and personal behaviors.

Supporting Evidence

- The school has based their social emotional learning environment on the Responsive Classroom approach, which emphasizes academic, social, and emotional growth. As a result, the school includes a morning meeting for every class to address social emotional learning and bring focus to speaking and listening skills. The guidance counselor has been integral in implementing restorative circles with students throughout the school to build listening and speaking skills that become foundations for effective academic and personal behaviors. As part of the school's philosophy, each classroom teacher observed had a calm, soft voice when interacting with students at all times. The NYC School Survey results in 2016 were all above the city average, ranging between 90 percent and 100 percent across all areas.

- Parents reported that they feel welcome and are greeted as partners in the school. Clear communication is documented in a family handbook. This includes monthly Family Fridays, with opportunities to see culminating activities of the grade level content studies. Parents noted during the meeting that a weekly Coffee with Pat (the principal) was another system in place that made them feel that the principal was accessible and concerned with their input. The principal, the teachers, and the parents all reported a high percentage of parents attending the parent teacher conferences. All parents reported receiving the principal’s weekly email on Sundays and weekly emails from their student’s teachers that keeps them informed of what the academic focus in the classroom is during the week and helps them work with their children at home to reinforce the learning that happens in the classroom at school.

- Students have input into how the cross-curricular, interdisciplinary content studies are conducted by coming up with their own guiding questions that direct the flow of the content study. For example, during the restaurant review, a culminating activity involved the students presenting a restaurant environment inside their classroom. After visiting local restaurants, the students came up with their own mock restaurant inside their classroom. Students decided what the menu would be, how they would serve the food, and where customers would sit. After the guidance counselor read The Sandwich Swap to some of the students, the students advocated to create an event centered on all students from various backgrounds and cultures to bring food to share with their peers at the school that each class is participating in which was driven by student request and input. The school is also ensuring that diversity is well represented in classroom libraries.
Area of Focus

| Quality Indicator: | 2.2 Assessment | Rating: Proficient |

Findings
The school uses common assessments to determine student progress toward goals across grades and subject areas. Across classrooms, teachers’ assessment practices reflect the use of ongoing checks for understanding and student self-assessment.

Impact
Across classrooms, teachers’ assessment practices and effective adjustments to curricula and instruction meet the learning needs of all students. However, current assessment practices do not create a clear picture of student progress over the course of the school year, nor are students aware of their next learning steps.

Supporting Evidence

- The school uses Teachers College Reading and Writing Project AssessmentPro to track common assessment data four times a year gathered from ongoing running records across all classes. In addition, Teachers College Reading and Writing Project benchmark reading levels and marking period assessments are conducted five times a year. The data is used to adjust curricula and instruction for students to meet their individual learning needs. Teacher teams meet to review data in AssessmentPro and on demand writing on a consistent basis. A math beginning of the year benchmark exam and an end of year benchmark is used in addition to ongoing end of chapter assessments from the Investigations math curriculum. However, the school’s use of common assessments is not prevalent across all classes and does not create a clear picture of student progress toward goals across grades and subjects.

- In some classrooms, teachers use student checklists for writing, thumbs up, thumbs down, on demand writing, whisper to your thumb, and turn and talk with a partner as checks for understanding. A nonfiction revision checklist is used as a student self-assessment, so is a self-assessment of math facts. Students also assess by giving a tip and a complement while their peers were presenting their stories to the class. Teachers were observed circulating throughout classes to check in with students and assess progress. The resulting support came in the form of individual conferences and feedback to identified groups of students. Parents noted that students bring work home every Wednesday in a folder that has specific comments from the teacher aimed at helping the student continue their learning at home. However, the varied use of ongoing checks for understanding during instruction was not evident across all classrooms, nor did the checks for understanding result in making effective instructional adjustments in the moment.

- In some classes visited students were in differentiated groups. Evidence revealed that students are assigned to different groups in relation to assessment data. Reading, writing, and math assessment data is used to determine the groups to which students are assigned. However, not all students could demonstrate increased mastery and some were not aware of their next learning steps.
Additional Finding

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Quality Indicator:</th>
<th>1.1 Curriculum</th>
<th>Rating:</th>
<th>Well Developed</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>

Findings
School leaders and faculty ensure that curricula are aligned to Common Core Learning Standards and strategically integrate the instructional shifts. Curricula and academic tasks are planned and refined using student work and data.

Impact
The school's curricula results in coherence across grades and subject areas through Content Studies that promote college and career readiness so that students have access to the curricula and are cognitively engaged.

Supporting Evidence
- Review of curricular documents revealed alignment to the Common Core State Standards and New York State content standards where applicable, as well as integration of the instructional shifts across grades and content areas. The school uses Teachers College Reading and Writing Project curriculum and Fundations for reading and writing. In math, Investigations in Number, Data and Space is combined with Contexts for Learning Mathematics. FOSS (Full Option Science System) is used for science, and the school created Content Studies for social studies, across interdisciplinary units.

- Evidence of strategic integration of the instructional shifts in English Language Arts is reinforced with academic language, balanced with fiction and non-fiction texts. Listening and speaking skills, along with citing evidence from text as students speak, read, and write are also emphasized. For example, a second grade lesson plan asks students to stop after each section while they are reading the nonfiction book, Bears, to think about what that section is mostly about. A kindergarten writing lesson plan, has students revising and editing their persuasive letters using a revision checklist. A second grade reading lesson plan has students make inferences supported by evidence from the text. In math curricula, fluency of math skills is evident. For example, in a kindergarten math lesson plan, students are asked to build fluency by finding different combinations of 10 displayed in graphs created by the students. A pre-kindergarten lesson plan on reviewing data from the bread study, asks students to use square blocks to vote which bread style they preferred from the bread study unit. Students use the visual graph of the square blocks to see which choice had more votes.

- Curriculum documents include evidence of modification by adding extensions that were not included in the adopted curriculum. Investigations and Contexts for Learning Mathematics resources are merged in curriculum documents. A showcase of the school's curriculum includes Content Studies, and interdisciplinary units spanning across content areas. Each grade level does two Content Studies per school year, integrating social studies with reading, writing, and math in a cross curricular unit that is planned and customized based on student data by grade level cohort teachers. These include in pre-kindergarten, a bread study and a color mixing study connected to art. A bulb study in kindergarten, followed by a chick study. In first grade, a restaurant study, followed by a frog study. In second grade, a farmer’s market Content Study, which spanned from October to February, is followed later in the year with a Content Study on birds, from April to June. The Content Studies involve field trips and culminating activities where students demonstrate their learning.
Additional Finding

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Quality Indicator:</th>
<th>1.2 Pedagogy</th>
<th>Rating:</th>
<th>Proficient</th>
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Findings

Across classrooms, teaching practices are aligned to the curricula and reflect an articulated set of beliefs about how students learn best involving the workshop model that is informed by the Danielson *Framework for Teaching* and the instructional shifts.

Impact

Across classrooms, student work products and discussions reflect high levels of student thinking and participation, so that all students produce meaningful work products.

Supporting Evidence

- The school’s articulated beliefs of how students learn best is rooted in the workshop model that includes explicit mini-lessons, students working in small groups, and choice within the classroom to foster their learning. In a second grade classroom, a lesson designed to have students make inferences from the text and images they see in the story they are reading as a class, supported by evidence from the text. Students participated in a focused, student centered discussion of *A Bike Like Sergio’s*. In a first grade class, during a lesson about writing like scientists, students were asked to use academic language to develop an understanding of how to find words that describe more accurately. In the mini-lesson, the teacher guides students through using “properties” as a better substitute for “these ways of” and using “flexible” instead of “stretchy.” Students were in groups, creating books on matter. One student said, “Matter is everything that takes up space. Matter is everywhere.”

- In a pre-kindergarten class, students participated in comparing two types of bread whilearticulating which they prefer and why. Students participated in a turn and talk with partners to discuss which bread they preferred, matzah or white bread, and their reasons why. The class had made matzah and white bread recently as part of the continuing class Content Study unit. Integrating math content into the lesson, the students were given blocks, to “vote” for their choice on which type of bread they preferred. The class counted aloud as they figured out which bread was the most popular within the class. Students were able to figure out differences between numbers and why one choice was more than the other.

- In a kindergarten class, while reinforcing Common Core Learning Standards two students read their persuasive writing piece to the class, the rest of the students offered feedback on how they could improve their writing. Students used a resource chart that was displayed as a guide for improving their writing. In another kindergarten class, a mini-lesson guided students learning combinations of numbers to equal ten through a project of calculating numbers of red apples and green apples. Five green apples and five red apples equal ten apples. Students used a graphic organizer to color in red and green apples with their number combinations equaling ten. The teacher worked with a group of students with red and green manipulatives who needed additional supports. Other students were working independently, but the teacher rotated to independently working students and checked for understanding by conferencing with them.
Additional Finding

| Quality Indicator: | 3.4 High Expectations | Rating: Well Developed |

Findings

School leaders consistently communicate high expectations to staff. Additionally, school leaders and staff effectively communicate expectations connected to a path to college and career readiness.

Impact

Staff maintains and benefits from a culture of mutual accountability around high expectations. Partnerships with families support students in their progress toward college and career readiness and the partnership is specifically focused on extensions of the school's instructional program.

Supporting Evidence

- The principal conducts frequent classroom observations with feedback based on Danielson’s *Framework for Teaching* that contain specific language from the rubric, evidence from the classroom observation that supports the rating, and actionable next steps. These are then addressed in subsequent classroom observations. In addition, teachers receive a staff handbook from the principal that reviews areas of schoolwide focus such as recognizing the importance of challenging and engaging work, promoting learning as an active process, encouraging collaboration as a means to promote growth, communicate clearly, directly and sensitively, expectations to respond to parent emails within 24 hours, morning meetings across all classrooms, signals for students attention, classroom environment, managing behavior, and protocols for class trips. A professional development calendar makes clear that school leaders support teachers in their understanding of expectations in addressing topics such as questioning and discussion as instructional strategies, modeling mini-lessons, content study planning, and classroom management.

- Expectations are effectively communicated with parents through weekly emails from the principal, the school website, and at coffee sessions between school leadership and parents. Weekly newsletters for parents from each teacher outline instructional content being covered in classes across content areas and vocabulary words to reinforce at home. Parents appreciate the principal's focus on academics and the principal works closely with a very involved Parent Teacher Association (PTA) as an important partnership to support the school. The principal ensures that funding raised by the PTA supports the school's instructional focus, curriculum and learning experiences for the students through additional enrichment opportunities for all students. A parent reported, “The teachers understand the children. It’s a true partnership, they get them and there’s progress and movement. My daughter’s teacher is great at helping her at composing stories, editing her book for her, reminding her of spacing words, and each sentence beginning with a capitalized letter. We see a huge difference in her progress since the beginning of the year.”

- Teachers hold each other mutually accountable to instructional expectations by supporting each other in common planning sessions and inquiry work. For example, a teacher reported, “We use videos in our classrooms during instruction to use in professional development (PD). We did it in my class for professional development, we taped an accountable talk in morning meeting and brought it to PD, and someone else did it next time and used the strategy in her class.”
### Findings

The majority of teachers are engaged in inquiry-based grade-level teams that promote achievement of school goals and implementation of the Common Core Learning Standards. Teacher teams consistently analyze data and student work for students they share.

### Impact

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

### Supporting Evidence

- Teacher teams study student work that is common across grade level classes. Documentation from a second grade team meeting showed evidence of creating a math assessment for the end of Unit 6 Investigations 1, and word problems to assess strategies that students use in both addition and subtraction. The team also created an at-a-glance class checklist to use to analyze the math assessment data, focusing on charting the strategies that students use, and using that information to guide next steps regarding conferences with students and resulting decisions for small groups.

- Grade team meeting agendas and teacher team notes revealed that all grade teams are engaged in inquiry-based analysis of student work products, common assessment data, rubrics and strategies designed to address students’ learning needs. One team analyzed information from a writing pre-assessment and decided on next steps for students in small groups and conferencing. As a result, the team reviewed a writing pathways rubric and created a conferring and small group planning sheet to track individual student data back in the classroom. Analysis of student writing informed next steps for individual students. Patterns and trends in the data led the team to define next steps and create small groups.

- Teachers have strengthened their instructional capacity through team collaborations. One teacher reported, “My grade team is so important. Through the founding year, we were developing all the lesson plans, units, and had to be consistent between the two classrooms, while modifying them based on the programs from scratch.” Another teacher reported about the impact of the work of teacher teams on their team’s instruction, “Some of the questions we use during instruction, lead to PD for four week cycles, which leads to us using more open ended questions, and tier three or four DOK questions.” Progress toward goals for groups of students is documented according to Teachers College Reading and Writing Project Assessment Pro data. Students have demonstrated reading improvement through an increase in exceeds/meets standards from 79 percent to 83 percent from March 2015 to March 2017 and a subsequent decrease in approaches standards/needs support from 21 percent to 16 percent from March 2015 to March 2017.