Quality Review Report

2016-2017

Castle Bridge School
Elementary 06M513
560 West 169th St.
Manhattan
NY 10032

Principal: Julia Zuckerman

Dates of Review:
February 28, 2017 - March 1, 2017

LeadReviewer: Robin Cohen
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

Castle Bridge School serves students in grade K through grade 5. You will find information about this school, including enrollment, attendance, student demographics, and data regarding academic performance, at http://schools.nyc.gov/Accountability/tools/report/default.htm.

School Quality Ratings

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Instructional Core</th>
<th>Area</th>
<th>Rating</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>To what extent does the school...</strong></td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>1.1 Ensure engaging, rigorous, and coherent curricula in all subjects, accessible for a variety of learners and aligned to Common Core Learning Standards and/or content standards</td>
<td>Additional Finding</td>
<td>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>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>Additional Finding</td>
<td>Well Developed</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: | 1.4 Positive Learning Environment | Rating: | Well Developed |

Findings

The school has established a highly supportive and extended family culture, evident throughout the school, informed by a theory of action. Professional development for teachers is aligned to the needs of all constituents.

Impact

Students and adults treat each other respectfully and student voice is meaningfully included in schoolwide decisions, resulting in a positive learning environment, where students adopt effective academic and personal behaviors.

Supporting Evidence

- Parents, students, and teachers say the school is welcoming and inclusive. Parents stated the school is, “a community that helps and supports one another in doing their best.” Unique to the school is their yearly summer retreats, one at the beginning and one at the end of the summer. The purpose is to continue building a positive learning environment to further enhance the school’s inclusive culture. The entire staff participates in the retreats resulting in early academic planning, the establishment of teacher teams, and revised behavior plans with the purpose of maintaining a trusting and safe school environment. Based on the 2015-2016 School Quality Guide, 97 percent of all constituents agreed that trust is the significant factor in the school’s belief system.

- Parent and student interviews revealed that teachers and school leaders embed habits like “be proactive” and “have a plan” into daily lessons, thus providing a common language for discussing responsibilities and strategies to meet academic and social/emotional challenges. One of the school’s guiding principles is, “Children benefit from being part of the process of setting expectations.” Student voice is the foundation and heart of the school’s belief system. For example, students initiate, organize, and manage a schoolwide fashion show.

- Teachers are prepared to guide students’ social/emotional learning. The school has an inquiry team that reviews school policy and identifies what is working and what are the challenges. The school’s belief system states, “Academic success is inextricably tied to building social/emotional competencies.” The school has developed their own Social Emotional Responsive Practice program to decrease the number of behavior infractions and suspensions. The number of suspensions, as evidenced in the school’s Online Occurrence Report System at the time of the review, was zero percent.

- Professional development and parent workshops provide academic and social learning experiences for all community members. The 2015-2016 School Survey indicates 100 percent of teachers agree that professional development is focused and includes opportunities to work productively with colleagues in their school and other schools. 94 percent of parents agree that school staff consistently communicates with them about their child’s progress, how they can help their child to learn, and promote family and community involvement in the school. In addition, students are engaged in positive learning experiences throughout the day and during Project Time where collaboration and problem solving is stressed.
Area of Focus

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

Teachers use and create assessments and rubrics that align with the school's curricula to determine student progress towards goals. Teachers across most classes use ongoing checks for understanding, however, student self-assessment practices vary.

Impact

The school's assessment practices results in adjustments to the curricula, and actionable feedback and modifications for students. However, teacher prompting and consistency in the use of self-assessment vary across classrooms, thereby limiting some students' awareness of their next learning steps.

Supporting Evidence

- Across classrooms, teachers use common assessments to determine individual student progress toward goals and adjust curricula and instruction. Teachers continue to formally assess students’ reading levels using Fountas and Pinnell Running Records to assess student fluency and comprehension of fiction. In addition, teachers keep detailed observation notes describing students’ learning needs. In a kindergarten/grade one class, the teacher wrote on several students work samples, “Reads more fluently, but still confuses vowel sounds.” These observations notes were used to determine strategic groupings and refine whole class instruction.

- To address addition and subtraction deficits identified through formative assessment, teachers worked with a math coach to identify and create word problems and develop addition and subtraction strategies for students in kindergarten through grade two. In a kindergarten/grade one classroom, students were playing restaurant with playdoh. One student stated she wanted “a birthday cake” for her friend. The birthday girl then said she was six years old and needed six candles for the cake. The children then began to talk and draw how next year the birthday girl would be seven and would need one more candle. Across classrooms, teachers introduced the new addition and subtraction strategies and students applied the strategies and explained their thinking.

- Students review their work using checklists and rubrics which incorporate a rating scale. Teachers use the rubrics to provide students with guidance and feedback in the content areas. Teachers consistently use individual conferencing to provide actionable feedback, however, some teachers lead students to identify next steps, hindering these students’ opportunities to self-assess and determine their own next steps in learning. School leaders and staff stated their next step is to provide measurable, meaningful, and significant feedback to increase student ownership over their goals and performance.

- Checks for understanding were observed across classrooms and teachers circulated and documented student learning. For example, in a grade two/three classroom, the teacher conferenced with the students. In a grade four/five classroom, the teacher asked the class if they agreed or disagreed with a statement and whether the statement was fact or opinion. Although most teachers check for understanding by asking questions of the whole class, some teachers do not use the formative assessment data to make in-the-moment adjustments to instruction.
Additional Finding

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

School leaders and staff strategically integrate academic vocabulary and ensure that curricula across grades and content areas aligns to Common Core Learning Standards and are planned and refined using student work and assessment data.

Impact

The school's adoption and refinement of curricula results in schoolwide coherence and college and career readiness for all students. Academic tasks provide access for all students to be cognitively engaged.

Supporting Evidence

- The school provides the community with a unique program and diversified curricula. To meet all students' learning needs, the curricula includes academic, social/emotional, cultural, and dual-language components, as well as, a comprehensive arts program. The school's design includes mixed age/grade groupings with three classes in each grade band and one pre-kindergarten class. The dual language program supports the 25 percent of students who are more fluent in Spanish than English. A hallmark of the dual language program is the learning objective, language objective, and real-world application. Across grades, teachers infuse the instructional shifts into units and plans with an intentional focus on embedding academic vocabulary. Across the vast majority of classrooms observed, teachers used a variety of techniques to embed vocabulary into their lessons. In a two/three grade classroom, students read “Escape from Slavery.” In small groups, students identified new vocabulary words and predicted the meaning by using visual cues and discussions at their tables.

- The school has clearly defined criteria for what it means to exit a grade level and attain the key skills for each grade, ensuring college and career readiness. The school’s curriculum maps clearly define End of Year Expectations for each grade in all content areas. For example, the End of Year Writing Expectation for the second and third grade classes is an Opinion Piece, Non-fiction Writing, Narrative, and Poem. Teachers introduce the second grade students to the different writing forms while the third graders are refining their skills within each of the forms.

- The school uses EngageNY as the core curriculum and supplements with additional hands-on materials, such as Investigations. The school has a dedicated math coach who meets weekly with all teachers to plan math lessons that address the math instructional shifts, review and analyze student data, and share information concerning professional development workshops. During teacher team grade level meetings, teachers revise curriculum overviews, and add supplemental English and Spanish materials to support English Language Learners (ELLs).

- Faculty uses the Bears and the Morningside 4Rs Curriculum to support social/emotional learning. These curricula plan for access and engagement from diverse groups of students with a wide range of needs and talents. A review of the curricula demonstrates that teachers develop and plan academic tasks designed to meet the learning needs of the lowest and highest achieving students including ELLs and students with disabilities.
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

Teachers utilize appropriately challenging texts, graphic organizers, and reflection tools to engage students and support them in student discussions.

Impact

Across classrooms, appropriately challenging tasks and learning tools assist students in producing meaningful work products and promote discussions that reflect high levels of thinking and participation.

Supporting Evidence

- The school shared an articulated belief that all children can learn when teachers acknowledge different learning styles and modalities. Teachers modify and adjust their lessons to provide multiple entry points to meet the needs of all students, including ELLs and students with disabilities. Teachers provide students with different graphic organizers based on students’ previously identified performance levels. This was observed in a grade two/three classroom where children had different graphic organizers to chart the author’s purpose.

- A review of summer retreat and teacher meeting agendas provide evidence that teachers utilize the strategy of “reflection” to encourage and promote student thinking. In addition, in classrooms visited, students responded to teachers’ questions and had opportunities to discuss their wonderings with peers. In a grade four/five class, students referenced their non-fiction books and read a chunk of text to acquire new information. Students shared this information with peers supported by an “I learned” and “I am thinking about” graphic organizer.

- Teachers encourage students’ critical thinking and inquiry by asking thoughtful open-ended questions, encouraging students to ask each other questions and prompting students to analyze texts for content and structure. In a grade four/five class, the teacher asked students to read a paragraph from Esme Raji Codell’s “Sahara Special.” The class worked in three groups supported by the two teachers and a paraprofessional. The teachers provided guiding questions and clarification as needed. Students also conferred with peers as to the possible meaning of unfamiliar words. The teacher then asked students to imitate Codell’s writing, keeping the structure, but changing the content. Student discussions and conferring have yielded writing gains, based on teacher observation and student conferencing notes, students show improvements in focus, organization and framing conclusions.

- Unique to the school is the implementation of Project Time, a daily component of the teachers’ lesson plans. During Project Time, students choose a work area. Areas include puzzles, blocks, pretend, drawing and writing, sewing, sensory table, science, playdough, and construction. In each area, students build upon their existing knowledge and share their experiences with specific materials while teachers observe students and record anecdotes. Teachers ask questions and encourage collaboration, problem solving, and oral language. Students were observed working to build towers and discussing the uses of scientific equipment. Faculty has created Project Time Expectations for each grade level. High levels of student thinking and participation during Project Time were observed across classrooms.
**Additional Finding**

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<th>Quality Indicator:</th>
<th>3.4 High Expectations</th>
<th>Rating:</th>
<th>Well Developed</th>
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**Findings**

School leaders consistently provide training and communicate high expectations to the entire staff in alignment with the Danielson *Framework for Teaching*. Teachers effectively communicate high expectations to families that are connected to college and career readiness for students.

**Impact**

High expectations and successful partnership with families result in a culture of mutual accountability, collaboration, and buy-in on the part of school leaders, teachers, and families, and supports student progress towards those expectations.

**Supporting Evidence**

- The school leader expects teachers to provide a supportive, child-centered, learning environment that is rigorous and engaging. Leadership communicates with staff in a myriad of ways including a staff handbook, weekly school newsletters, bulletins, and schoolwide bottom line non-negotiables. The school leader supports staff’s implementation of these expectations through trainings, ongoing workshops, and a frequent cycle of observations. Teacher observations support teachers in strengthening their instructional practice and encourage a culture of mutual accountability. The principal meets with each teacher individually every other week and meets weekly with all paraprofessionals to establish a culture of mutual accountability.

- Teacher leaders design and present teacher workshops that align with the school’s instructional focus and respond to leader feedback from classroom observations. For example, school leaders noted that there are several new teachers on staff, therefore, ongoing workshops are developed to support these teachers with the instructional elements of lesson planning. The staff coach focuses on math, science, and project work. All teachers meet with the coach for weekly math meetings in order to examine student data and develop hands-on materials. In addition, a literacy specialist meets with the grade teams to discuss student work in reading and writing in both languages and provides support to AIS groups.

- During interviews, staff and parents expressed that they strive for the best for all students. Parents shared that they receive frequent updates on their child’s progress towards learning expectations connected to a path to college and career readiness. Teachers memorialize student progress in portfolios containing at least three samples of their best work accompanied by a rubric and self-reflection that identifies areas of strength and areas of improvement. Parents also receive newsletters which highlight monthly events and workshops to support students in developing literacy skills. Parent workshops provide information regarding the importance of literacy and dual language. One parent shared, “My child is learning Spanish to advance her future.” Parents attend publishing parties to support students writing progress and celebrate their accomplishments. One parent stated, “This school pushes my child to be excellent and pushes me to learn about the Common Core standards so I can partner in her education.”
## Additional Finding

<table>
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<tr>
<th>Quality Indicator:</th>
<th>4.2 Teacher Teams and Leadership Development</th>
<th>Rating:</th>
<th>Well Developed</th>
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</table>

### Findings

The vast majority of teachers engage in inquiry-based, structured professional collaborations that strengthen teacher instructional practices and promote the implementation of Common Core Standards. Distributed leadership structures are embedded within professional development and team planning.

### Impact

The teacher team structure has resulted in schoolwide instructional coherence and increased student achievement for all students. Collaboration and professional development lead to effective teacher leadership and allow teachers to play an integral role in key decisions that affect student learning across the school.

### Supporting Evidence

- Teachers meet at least twice a week in grade band teams and classroom teams. The grade band teams continue to refine curricula, develop materials in both English and Spanish, and plan field trips and student projects that will support the two grade design of all classes. The grade band teams also meet with the literacy specialist to discuss and analyze students’ work in reading and writing in both languages. Grade bands determine each band foci, with kindergarten and grade one focusing on weekly individual conferences, grade two/three focusing on guided reading groups, and grade four/five focusing on the integration of book clubs with content-based research. In addition, the grade band team meetings help inform lesson planning that occurs during the weekly classroom team meetings. The consistency and focus of meetings across grade bands ensures school-wide instructional coherence.

- A review of team meeting agendas show all teachers engaged in professional collaborations assessing complex text, math unit planning, and analyzing student work to determine next instructional steps. In grade level math teams, teachers plan, utilizing a focused agenda and create a timeline for the work to be completed. For example, in reviewing the third grade math team agendas, teachers were focusing on providing multiplication strategies for their classes. Teachers create a cycle of inquiry in which they analyze student work and make instructional changes. Follow-up meeting agendas include the experiences of students utilizing the team developed strategies and evidence of increased achievement for students, including ELLs and students with disabilities. Based on the 2015-2016 School Performance Dashboard, 79 percent of ELLs in this school demonstrate progress in comparison to the citywide average of 57 percent.

- Teacher leaders facilitate team meetings and support instructional decisions that impact student learning and best teacher practices. Based on the 2015-2016 Overall Advance Ratings, 93 percent of teachers are rated Highly Effective and 7 percent are rated Effective. Teachers create professional development for staff, new teachers, and families and the math coach supports data analysis and math unit planning. Teachers affirmed that they have a significant voice in the selection of supplemental curricula to support student learning across the school. Teams also make additions to graduation requirements based on curriculum units and culminating grade level activities.