Quality Review Report

2016-2017

P.S. 118 Lorraine Hansberry

Elementary 29Q118

190-20 109th Rd.
Queens
NY 11412

Principal: Michelle Soussoudis

Dates of Review:
April 27, 2017 - April 28, 2017

Lead Reviewer: Evelyn Terrell
The Quality Review Report

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

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

Information about the School

P.S. 118 Lorraine Hansberry 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

<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>Area</td>
<td>Rating</td>
</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>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>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>Area of Celebration</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>
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</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>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 leadership has focused on building a positive and safe learning environment by implementing greetings at the beginning of the school day, providing additional supports in the cafeteria, revising dismissal procedures and including input from the student council. Professional development opportunities support student learning, family outreach, and a safe environment.

Impact
There has been a decrease in behavioral infractions and an increase in staff collaboration, which supports student achievement and a safe environment.

Supporting Evidence

- A review of the Online Occurrence Reporting System (OORS) reflected 33 student infractions and 8 suspensions during the previous school year. The newly assigned principal shared that the data indicated that the cafeteria and schoolyard were areas that required additional supports. This led to the hiring of additional staff to supervise students during the three lunch periods. The cafeteria was set up so that only two grades would be dining together, for example, grades two and three, kindergarten and grade one, and grades four and five. The current OORS data reflects 9 infractions and 3 suspensions at this time, as compared to the last year. Students state that they feel safe in the lunchroom as well as in their classrooms and hallways. The principal has reduced the use of the ten exits during the end of day dismissal to only two exits, which lead directly to the schoolyard. The second safety officer allows for one of the safety officers to help supervise the staggered school dismissal and supports a safe school environment.

- Teachers shared that they feel there is a “breath of fresh air” throughout the building and make every effort to come to school every day. Many teachers interviewed, including the chapter chairperson, stated that they feel that they are supported by the administration and therefore they come to school before the regular school day, do intervisitations with their colleagues to learn new teaching strategies, collaborate during their lunch and some stay to work in their rooms after the end of the regular work day, which they stated they did not do during the last school year. Throughout the building, students and staff greet each other in the hallways, which they all agree has set a respectful tone that supports a positive atmosphere.

- The student council meets with their coordinator to discuss incentives to promote a positive school climate. Their voice has led to a family movie night and “twin day”, in which students collaborate with a peer, and plan to dress alike during dress down day, instead of wearing their school uniform. At the beginning of the school day, students recite the school pledge and the principal announces classes with 100 percent attendance. Students stated that they feel good when they hear their class announced and they enjoy coming to school to get better grades.

- The guidance counselor has provided staff development to introduce a new conflict mediation program which trains teachers how to work with students on how to handle aggressive behaviors through discussions. Teachers in the lower grades discussed how they use puppets to illustrate appropriate behavior. Parents shared that the staff discussed the discipline policy and how infractions are addressed at the beginning of the school year. Teachers also shared that students talk to each other to resolve problems which has decreased incidents and more focus in the classroom.
Area of Focus

Quality Indicator: 2.2 Assessment
Rating: Developing

Findings
The school’s grading policy and assessments are loosely aligned to the school’s curriculum and do not consistently analyze information on student learning. Across most classrooms, teachers’ assessment practices inconsistently reflect the use of ongoing checks for understanding and student self-assessment.

Impact
Students’ work samples and grades reflect limited actionable feedback to students regarding student achievement. The lack of ongoing checks for understanding limits opportunities to adjust curricular and instruction in order to meet the needs of all students.

Supporting Evidence

- The school’s grading policy does not consistently align to the curricula. For example, in the handbook, the administration has provided a general grading policy that outlines ranges for proficiency levels 1 through 4. For example, work at level 4 is graded between 93 to 100 percent. Level 3 ranges from 80 percent to 92 percent, level 2 is reflected at 70 percent to 79 percent and level 1 at 65 percent to 69 percent. However, a second grading policy distributed to the staff provides a grading policy which is divided into percentages for homework, classwork/participation, projects, portfolios, and examination for content areas in math, science, language arts and social studies, as well as non-major subjects. For example, in math 10 percent of the grade is for homework, 40 percent for examinations, 10 percent for projects, and 20 percent each for classwork and portfolios. Parents interviewed articulated concerns about not understanding how a proficiency level is assigned to the numerical grades on the work that their children bring home, such as a grade of “65” on a math test. Consequently, the principal shared that she is working with the SLT to create one grading policy.

- Teachers use rubrics, checklists, chapter tests, and unit assessments. However, they are not consistently used to provide actionable feedback to all students. A review of outside bulletin boards captured glows and grows which were circled on the rubric. However, while actionable feedback such as, “Very extensive vocabulary. Your sentence structures and grammar should be checked.” was provided on some work samples, specific actionable feedback was not consistent across most work samples. For example, on a fourth grade social studies essay, the student received level three and level four, however the feedback from the teacher stated, “Very good”. Comments on an essay about resources stated to the student “You started off very well. Next time, stay on topic!” A grade five opinion essay on junk food, provided during the interview did not have a rubric or actionable feedback to guide the student toward next steps for improvements.

- A teacher was observed using an entrance ticket in order to assess students’ understanding of how to calculate volume at the beginning of the lesson. In another classroom, the teacher was observed with a clipboard as she circulated amongst the students. However, in the majority of classrooms observed, ongoing evaluation of students’ comprehension was not consistent across the school. For example, in an upper grade class the teacher circulated as students worked on group tasks in response to a character. The teacher moved from group to group without documenting student’s performance. Consequently, opportunities to capture students’ strengths and challenges to inform effective on the spot instructional adjustments to the lesson or modify the curriculum were missed.
Additional Finding

Quality Indicator: 1.1 Curriculum
Rating: Developing

Findings

Across grades and subjects, curricular and academic tasks do not consistently emphasize rigorous habits or higher-order learning skills. Adjustments to the curriculum and instruction are not consistently reflected in the curriculum.

Impact

Opportunities to access rigorous tasks that are planned and refined to support cognitive engagement are not consistently available for a diversity of students.

Supporting Evidence

- The principal engaged the staff in an activity to define rigor across the school during a professional development session after school. The staff brainstormed their definition of rigor as a task that provides challenge, makes the task attainable, is standards based with multi-strategies, interdisciplinary, and is at levels three and four on Webb’s Depth of Knowledge tool (DOK). Teachers were provided with various student tasks and asked to assess the grade level, the standards addressed and to determine if the work posted was rigorous. Many teachers agreed that the level of rigor based on their definition, was lacking in many of the tasks. For example, a task for grade four students stated that readers would locate key details and information and understand text features. A grade two task stated that students would read text at Fountas and Pinnell level L. However, the teachers noted that the quality of the rigor in tasks were not consistent across grades to support all students.

- Across grades, academic tasks do not consistently push rigor and higher order thinking. While a third grade science task required students to look at their materials and create a question to support a hypothesis on how to inflate a balloon, most tasks did not require higher order thinking. For example, a task in a first grade class required the students to read from a worksheet and give a title to a story; without citing text based evidence to support their thinking. A task for the students in grade three special education class asked the students to name three things plants need to survive. A grade three math task, students recorded information from a worksheet and were required draw the parts of a robot on graph paper, then cut it out and clue the parts together. Consequently, opportunities to build rigorous task for all students are limited.

- Teachers shared that in the past they have worked individually to implement the ReadyGen program for English Language Arts (ELA). This year they are beginning to collaborate by grade to review the curriculum. Some teachers have received training on looking at student work and turnkey the information during the extended day professional development sessions. They are beginning to collaborate on how to use student data to plan and modify the curriculum in order to engage students in cognitive tasks across subject areas. However, a review of curriculum maps do not yet indicate any modifications.
Additional Finding

Quality Indicator: 1.2 Pedagogy
Rating: Proficient

Findings
Most teaching practices are aligned to the curricula with academic vocabulary to support the instructional shifts and reflect a belief about how students learn best. Across classrooms, students participate in active discussions.

Impact
Students are learning in an environment that is informed by the Danielson Framework for Teaching that supports high levels of student discussions and participation.

Supporting Evidence

- The administration and staff articulated that students learn best when, “They are in a positive safe space without fear of ridicule.” Students raised their hands to take turns in the lesson and were focused on the lessons as they responded to the teacher. Most teachers’ lesson plans incorporate the Danielson Framework for Teaching and incorporated a learning objective, an aligned standard, a mini lesson, tasks, as well as academic vocabulary. For example, in an upper grade math lesson, a learning outcome was noted as “I can solve a real world multi-step by multiplying a mixed number fraction. The standards were recorded, there were tasks and academic vocabulary, such as “mixed number, improper fraction and simplify to support students’ learning. The majority of lesson plans included similar content across subjects and students interviewed shared that are not criticized if they give an incorrect answer.

- During a visit to a grade one class, the teacher led the students in a discussion about human and non-human resources. After the mini-lesson, students were provided worksheets for their group and instructed to identify the human resources and record how the identified resources help people. The students actively discussed the pictures using “I agree” or “I do not agree”, as the teacher circulated from group to group to encourage the discussions. In the science lab, an upper grade class participated in table discussions about how to use an alka seltzer tablet, a cup of water, and an empty water bottle to inflate a balloon.

- Students in a grade five class worked in their table groups using a strategy in which they circled the numbers, underlined math words, box, explain, and solve the problem (CUBES). Students actively used this strategy at their tables as they participated in a discussion of what information they used to solve the problem of mixed number fraction. In another class, students sat in groups with a book discussing which of two definitions of the word “vibrant” which the teacher had recorded on the board, was the best for the use of the word on the page they were discussing. The students were required to share with a partner why they selected “vibrant” to indicate the colorful nature of the pictures, or “vibrant” to reference the activities the characters engaged in at a festival.
Findings

The administration consistently communicates high expectations to the staff around building effective teaching practices and a safe environment. The school effectively communicates high expectations to families connected to college and career readiness skills.

Impact

Teachers receive professional development on improving their teaching practices. Families understand how their children are meeting expectations for the next level, through participation in workshops and conferences with their child’s teacher.

Supporting Evidence

- At the beginning of the school year, each teacher receives a Staff Handbook, which outlines the operational and instructional expectations. In addition, there is a daily message board to inform teachers of daily events and the instructional focus. The principal sends emails in reference to expectations to increase the instructional focus, such as maintaining a record of ongoing checks for students’ understanding to inform grouping and adjustments to the curricula. The administration conducts walkthroughs to hold teachers accountable for the instructional expectations aligned to the Danielson Framework for Teaching. This year the focus has been on increasing practices around components 3b (Using Questioning and Discussion Techniques) and 3d (Using assessment in instruction). Teachers are expected to allow students to engage in accountable talk, design essential questions aligned to the learning outcomes, provide talking prompts for students to engage in discussions, as well as maintain ongoing checks for students’ comprehension during instruction. In order to support these expectations, teachers are provided opportunities to engage in intervisitations of colleagues who have demonstrated effective practices in these areas.

- The school community has a partnership with a local University in which one of the professors provides professional development on best practices for math such as requiring student to talk about how they solve problems and to show their work. In addition, the principal conducted a workshop on developing rigorous tasks in alignment with the DOK tool. Teachers turn key strategies on how to analyze students’ work using the Tuning Protocol during the extended school day on Mondays.

- Parents shared that they love the atmosphere of respect and support the principal has brought to the school. They expressed that teachers provide them with interim progress reports in between regular report cards. Student are rewarded with “Student of the Month” acknowledgment posted in the hallway. Workshops are provided on the expectations of what their child should know to be ready for the next grade. During college and career day, parents and former students come in to speak to students about their jobs and how to get ready for college. ClassDojo is used to communicate with teachers as well as phone calls and monthly calendars. A school pamphlet is provided to all parents which outlines the instructional focus, curriculum and programs, school hours, PTA meetings as well as the school mission and vision.
**Findings**

Teacher teams engage in collaborative inquiry and professional collaborations. Embedded leadership structures with the administrative cabinet are in place.

**Impact**

The work of teacher teams supports the school’s instructional goals. Teachers have a voice in key decisions that affect student learning across the school.

**Supporting Evidence**

- Teachers on each grade are provided with one period of common planning time each week to meet and collaborate on best teaching practices. This year teams are focused on improving the rigor of tasks and evaluating student work. In addition to grade level teams, vertical teams, which are composed of different members of the staff, meet to discuss teaching strategies that are being used across the school. For example, all teachers are using CUBES in math to support students in a step-by-step process to solve multi-step problems and to show their work. Teachers on grade five combine classes one period during the week to provide students with additional practice in building multiplication skills, which is an area of struggle through repeated practice using the times table and showing their work.

- During a grade two inquiry meeting, teachers were observed following the tuning protocol to review a student’s opinion writing sample. The team provided warm feedback in which they highlighted that the writing had a topic sentence which was posed in the form of a question. Each teacher took turns providing cool feedback, such as the writing does not clearly show a beginning, middle and end and lacks specific details. One of the strategies discussed to support this student in responding to a short response question was to have her restate the question, answer, cite two pieces of evidence and to explain (RACCE). Other options, such as having the student use a checklist to check her work was discussed.

- The instructional team meets with the administration to discuss ways to capture effective practices across the school so that all teams may share them. Google Drive is an option that has been discussed with the team to share teaching strategies across the school. In addition, teachers shared that they have input in decisions about programs that are brought into the school. For example, a group of teachers is receiving professional development on a social emotional program that will be piloted in the new school year. Teachers were selected in collaboration with the administration to attend at a “Showcase” school, which shares best practices, in order to provide supports in looking at students’ work and shared the strategies with the staff during the extended day professional development. During both teacher meetings, teachers stated that representatives are included in school wide decisions that support academic and social needs of the school and feel supported by the administration. In addition, teachers on each grade are responsible for designing the curriculum maps to meet the instructional needs of all students.