Quality Review Report

2016-2017

P.S. 9 Ryer Avenue Elementary School
Elementary 10X009
230 East 183rd St.
Bronx
NY 10458

Principal: Jacqueline Bailey

Dates of Review:
February 14, 2017 - February 15, 2017

Lead Reviewer: Jorge Estrella
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>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>To what extent does the school...</strong></td>
<td>Additional Finding</td>
<td>Well Developed</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>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>Area of Focus</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>Additional Finding</td>
<td>Proficient</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
School Culture

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<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 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 Proficient</td>
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</table>

Systems for Improvement

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<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 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 Proficient</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4.1 Observe teachers using the Danielson Framework for Teaching along with the analysis of learning outcomes to elevate school-wide instructional practices and implement strategies that promote professional growth and reflection</td>
<td>Area of Celebration Well Developed</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4.2 Engage in structured professional collaborations on teams using an inquiry approach that promotes shared leadership and focuses on improved student learning</td>
<td>Additional Finding 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 Proficient</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Area of Celebration

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

Findings

School leaders and teacher established Professional Learning Cycles (PLCs) and peer collaboration structures to support teacher development, including those new to the profession. Feedback to teachers accurately captures strengths, challenges, and next steps using the Danielson Framework for Teaching.

Impact

Feedback to teachers is elevating schoolwide instructional practices and supporting to implement strategies that promote professional growth and reflection.

Supporting Evidence

- School leaders designed a strategic schedule to conduct teacher observations cycles based on Advance and student outcomes. In the observation process, school leaders include pre- and post-observation conferences. In each meeting, the lesson plan, student work, student grouping and effective instructional strategies are discussed and planned. Through the Advance evaluation system, school leaders offer verbal and written feedback to teachers and debrief sessions are anchored on the Danielson Framework for Teaching rubric. Therefore, in alignment to the school’s goal to improve teacher practice, classroom visits are frequent and varied in order to provide feedback and support as per specific components of the Danielson Framework for Teaching.

- School leaders developed a strategic plan to support teachers in raising the quality of instruction, which led them to engage all teachers in PLCs that are facilitating a schoolwide common understanding of effective pedagogical strategies. Another approach for teacher development is the Peer Support Guided Reading partnerships across all grades, where teachers from each grade get an extra prep to plan guided reading lessons with their Peer Support Partner or to provide peer-guided reading classroom support. This initiative has helped teachers collaborate with their colleagues so that they can learn from each other, and it also supports students by ensuring that each class gets at least one period a week where there are two teachers leading guided reading groups simultaneously. In addition, staff developers and coaches provide them with a job-embedded support in their classrooms. Teachers reported that these professional development (PD) approaches have helped them to improve their teaching practice while having opportunities to meet with other colleagues beyond their grade. Additionally, the review of Advance data, along with dialogue with school leaders, revealed that these practices have led to improved pedagogy. For example, when evaluating instruction, “effective” and “highly effective” ratings increased from 74.6 percent in 2014-2015 to 89 percent in the 2015-16. The most improved component was how well teachers use questioning and discussion techniques, where the “effective” and “highly effective” ratings went from 69 percent to 87 percent.

- Teachers reported that after observations they received verbal feedback within 24 hours and, as one teacher explained, “The next steps helped me understand what I need to improve in planning, student engagement, and offered strategies for differentiated instruction.” Another teacher shared, “my next steps were to include visuals to my checklist. I developed my new checklist and shared in my grade level team, then the grade leaders shared in the grade leaders team, later I learned that my instructional tool is being used in other grades.

- Onboarding new teachers is embedded in the strategic PD plan. Once a new teacher is hired, school leaders, and teachers offer the necessary supports needed to become part of the school community. The school hosts a New Teacher Orientation before school begins, where new teachers are provided information about school protocols, schedules, curriculum and resources available. Every new teacher is also assigned a mentor, a grade leader and an immediate supervisor to support them, as well as ongoing professional learning opportunities.
Area of Focus

| Quality Indicator: | 1.2 Pedagogy | Rating: | Proficient |

Findings

The implementation of pedagogical strategies to teach students is reflecting high levels of student thinking and participation. Across classrooms, teaching practices give all learners multiple entry points into curricula.

Impact

While teachers are providing multiple entry points into the curricula with challenging tasks to support the engagement of all students in higher levels of thinking and participation, in the vast majority of classrooms, this practice has not yet resulted in ownership for all students. Furthermore, in some classes, high quality supports and extensions are not fully implemented.

Supporting Evidence

- Across classrooms, teachers’ questioning and discussion techniques provide scaffolds and extensions for students to access content areas. In a first-grade writing lesson on planning beginning and middle events of their narrative, the teacher posed questions to effectively engage students in collaborative discussions to plan their drafts via one-on-one, group, and a teacher-directed activity. The teacher provided graphic organizers, traffic light transition words, vocabulary development, and differentiated instruction that was visible by tiered groupings with differentiated tasks. As the teacher circulated about the room, she pushed students’ thinking with questions like, “What happened before that?” or “How did that happen?” All students were engaged in the writing task and made their thinking visible in their interactions and written work. However, some teachers are yet to present high quality supports to fully engage higher achievers. In some classes, some of the higher achievers remained idle after finishing their tasks.

- During lessons, most teachers allocate time to confer with students in a one-on-one or group setting and are aware of each student’s level of understanding and participation. This awareness informs how teachers differentiate instruction for each child and was demonstrated in an English as a New Language (ENL) class. The teacher created different graphic organizers to engage students in how characters’ actions contribute to the events, plots, and theme in text. Furthermore, the teacher supported students in their native language by using cognates, sentence frames, and illustrations. Thus, all students observed were engaged and made their thinking visible through their interactions with peers and teachers.

- In most classrooms visited, tasks and lessons facilitated student participation and sustained both student-to-student dialogue and student-generated questions. For example, in a fourth-grade science class, students were assigned to make predictions to measure the amount of rainfall collected in different cups. The teacher used effective questioning to drive a high level of peer-to-peer questioning and discussion as students worked in groups using academic language and tools to record their predictions. However, this practice in some classrooms is yet to promote cognitively demanding tasks or student progress toward learning goals, leading to missed opportunities for student participation in learning activities that allow them to demonstrate high levels of thinking and engagement in discussions.

- Student discussions where teachers engage students in accountable talk and collaboration activities were observed in most classrooms, but few involve the students sitting in groups; instead, they work independently. In a second-grade math lesson, the teacher circulated about the room, engaged students in critical thinking skills and promoted discussions. The teacher pushed students to think about different approaches to solve their math problems. However, this encouragement for students to take ownership over their own approaches to problem solving and learning was not present in the vast majority of classrooms.

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

Rigorous habits, higher-order critical thinking skills and academic tasks are embedded in curricula across grades and subjects in a coherent way. Curricula and academic tasks are initially designed and later informed and refined from analysis of student work and data.

Impact

All students, including English Language Learners (ELLs) and students with disabilities, have access to rigorous curricula and academic tasks that involve higher-order thinking, are cognitively engaging and require all students to demonstrate their thinking.

Supporting Evidence

- Lesson plans within units of study support the development of rigorous habits and higher order thinking skills by integrating tasks that promote critical thinking. For example, in a fifth-grade literacy lesson, students read segments of *Escape to Freedom* related to their pre-selected character. Then, students looked for inferences on their character through reading and discussions and captured them in a graphic organizer. They demonstrate understanding of their character by identifying character traits and events that shaped the character’s central qualities. Then, each group creates a “character traits and experiences” poster, which are then presented to the class.

- Grade level teacher teams differentiate academic tasks and tiered activities by using data and a variety of strategies to ensure multiple entry points and access to the curriculum for all. English as a New Language (ENL) teaching methodologies are incorporated into the curricula and include language development both in verbal and written form, as well as tasks that reinforce listening and speaking skills. Adaptations have been made to materials and activities for ELLs to ensure their engagement in rigorous instruction with high expectations. These include model tasks, word banks with names of text features, graphic organizers, sentence starters, timelines to connect events, vocabulary cards, and the use of manipulatives in math.

- The review of instructional plans revealed that unit plans and lesson plans inform how instruction is initially planned and later modified using student work and data to strategically inform student grouping. For example, in a second-grade math class, plans call for students to be grouped based on formative assessment data. In a fourth-grade social studies lesson plan, instructional grouping is based on the results of the Developmental Reading Assessment, 2nd Edition (DRA2).

- Lesson plans of observed classrooms demonstrate that teachers consistently use differentiated instructional strategies based on data. For example, the self-contained fifth-grade math lesson plan on adding and subtracting fractions had a four-tiered task, which allowed for some students to access only basic understanding of fractions while other, higher-achievers were provided more rigorous extensions. This lesson plan also included the use of mini whiteboards, tablets, dice, fraction hearts, and talking sticks to support ELLs with accountable talk and explaining their thinking in complete sentences.
Findings

While teachers use common assessments aligned to curricula in all subjects and consistently track student progress. Across classrooms, teachers use rubrics that are aligned with the school’s curricula and provide actionable feedback to students.

Impact

The school’s use of assessment analysis results in curricula refinements and monitoring student progress, yet there are some missing opportunities to offer meaningful feedback to students.

Supporting Evidence

- Rubrics and checklists are used across classrooms and subject areas. Rubrics describe the performance expectations for all assignments and several students were able to explain the purpose and use of rubrics. It was evident that they understand that these assessment tools are used to inform their learning and guide them to their next steps. For example, a rubric for writing narrative traits allowed teachers and students to assess work based on ideas and content, organizational structure, voice, word choice, sentence fluency, conventions, and presentation format. Students reported that the use of rubrics helped them have a better understanding of their progress towards their instructional goals and to get better grades.

- Teachers provide feedback to students using rubrics, and checklists with glows and grows were noted on students work products. One fifth-grade teacher’s glow to a student read, “You have a good voice in your writing. It reads like you are having a conversation with the readers.” The grow read, “You did a great deal of writing using your own voice, which is terrific, but you must remember that this is an informational essay, [so] you should have more facts from the resources that you used. This will help make your paper stronger.” However, this level of meaningful feedback along with actionable next steps is yet to be fully implemented in some classrooms.

- The school is using a variety of common assessments in all content areas to gather multiple sources of data, and be able to make informed decisions on the instructional programming of the school. For example, for early literacy skills, the school uses the DRA2, which is administered three times a year for kindergarten through grade five; a baseline assessment is administered in October, a mid-year assessment in February, and a year-end assessment in May. School leaders and teachers in their teacher team meetings review results from the DRA2 to identify trends and make adjustments to guide instruction and interventions for students who need additional support.

- Teachers identify standards where students are not performing well, teachers then discuss and make instructional decisions to address these gaps by adapting the curricula, instruction, pacing calendar, and informing interventions. The school also assesses early reading skills through multiple data sources in conjunction with language proficiency test scores. The data from these multiple sources revealed the need to provide early reading intervention to students who struggle with early reading skills, such as sound-symbol correspondence and word recognition. Teachers reported that during their grade level meetings they use the results of the DRA2, baseline assessments data to make informed decisions about their instruction during their peer support guided reading lessons.
Findings
School leaders regularly communicate high instructional expectations to the entire staff supported through PLCs. Moreover, school leaders and staff consistently communicate to both students and families high expectations connected to a path of college and career readiness.

Impact
High expectations are embedded throughout school structures, resulting in a system of accountability for staff. The school offers families information related to their children’s academic performance and progress; they understand that student achievement is the key to a successful path to college and career readiness.

Supporting Evidence

- High expectations for staff are consistently communicated through frequent cycles of observation and feedback to teachers, peer-classroom visitations, initial planning conferences and PD. Every week, the principal publishes the PS 9 Weekly to inform faculty about high expectations for students, progress towards meeting school goals as well as upcoming school events. All teachers are engaged in weekly PLCs where they have a menu of professional learning opportunities on specific components of the Danielson Framework for Teaching to inform pedagogical approaches such as student engagement, assessments, questioning and discussion techniques. Furthermore, teachers receive one-on-one support from the staff developer. Additionally, school leaders hold staff accountable through observations, where they offer verbal and written feedback, individual conferences devoted to creating a shared understanding of effective teaching practices to ensure implementation in future lessons, and conduct data discussions with teachers on summative and formative assessment results.

- The school communicates high expectations for learning and next steps for students through multiple ways. For example, families regularly receive teacher notices, phone calls, school monthly calendar, and student progress reports. Parents shared that they have access to an online program called ClassDojo that provides them with immediate teacher feedback in addition to regular emails that inform them about student behaviors and academic progress, as well as to provide them with important reminders. However, some parents were not aware of this online platform. School leaders mentioned that this form of communication is yet to be fully implemented.

- Teachers meet with students at the end of units of study to discuss their goals, academic progress, and class expectations. Students’ instructional goals are visible on their desks and most students explained what areas they needed to improve to meet their learning targets. Teachers provide parents with progress reports four times a year, including standardized exam results. Parents reported that during weekly parent outreach time, they have opportunities to discuss their children’s academic and social-emotional progress, or to address any concern that they may have. The school offers opportunities to parents to participate in training sessions to inform them about the instructional shifts, the Common Core, and how to support their students at home. For example, the third-grade team produces bi-monthly newsletters to parents to inform them about the Common Core expectations along with tips and online resources to support their children at home.

- The school has proactively reached out to families in order to provide them information about their children's progress. For example, during a monthly meal with school leaders, parents are informed of what their children are learning in literacy and math. They also hold literacy and math curriculum nights, distribute monthly grade-level newsletters that include educational websites, e-book links, reading and math strategies to try at home, translations in Spanish, and tips for homework help.
Additional Finding

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<th>Quality Indicator:</th>
<th>4.2 Teacher Teams and Leadership Development</th>
<th>Rating:</th>
<th>Proficient</th>
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</table>

Findings

All teachers are engaged in structured inquiry-based professional learning teams and PLCs promoting the implementation of Common Core Learning Standards. Embedded leadership structures are in place.

Impact

The work of teacher teams and PLCs has increased school-wide instructional capacity of teachers. Leadership structures are in place so that teachers have opportunities to lead initiatives that improve learning outcomes across the school.

Supporting Evidence

- The principal ensures that teachers engage in ongoing professional collaborations in the implementation of the Common Core and instructional shifts. Teachers participate in inquiry-based professional collaborations, grade leaders meet weekly and grade level teams meet twice a month. In addition, to enhance staff interactions, the school uses an online collaboration tool. In grade level team meetings, teachers work collaboratively in creating lessons that support individual learning gaps. One of the outcomes of these collaborations is the Peer Guided Reading across grades, which allow teachers the opportunity to work with a partner in providing small-group instruction through guided reading. In addition to reducing the class size to meet individual students’ needs, teachers are also strengthening the instructional capacity by sharing teaching strategies.

- Grade level teams are facilitated by grade leaders who serve as facilitators and supported by staff developers and coaches. The National School Reform Faculty Atlas protocol is used in grade level sessions and always includes the review of student work products or student data. Teachers use their time for inquiry-based study efficiently to prepare the next steps of analyzing student work and to review if the initial instructional strategies proved beneficial to student learning. This analysis is used to evaluate and revise the curriculum and instructional practice in order to meet the needs of all learners. For example, in a second-grade planning meeting, teachers were engaged in discussing instructional strategies for a writing task around biographical sketches where they determined implications for instruction, use of different entry points and assessment strategies.

- Structures to promote professional collaboration between school leaders and teachers, key decisions relative to PD and teacher initiatives have developed. For example, the school has implemented the Teacher Leadership Program, which involves four teacher leader mentors and five teacher leader members, who were selected based on proven expertise in different instructional areas. This team of teacher leaders has a yearlong action plan to provide support to their colleagues by leading PLCs, using data to inform instruction, facilitating intervisitations, mentoring and supporting school leaders to make instructional decisions. As a result, this work is building instructional capacity aligned to the Danielson Framework for Teaching.

- Teachers shared that they have contributed to decisions regarding the development of instructional resources across the grades. For example, teachers felt empowered to be able to decide to use the city recommended Common Core curricula, ReadyGen, GO Math!, and New York City Scope and Sequence for science, as resources. They then use these sources to create curricula maps, develop assessments, units of study and lessons plans that fit the specific needs of the students. During the meeting with teachers, a math teacher mentioned that the team made modifications to the math curriculum to address students’ needs. For example, teachers identified that the math curriculum needed adjustments to address the needs of ELLs and students with disabilities, so they made curricula modifications including mini-lessons, multiple entry-points and scaffolds.