Quality Review Report

2016-2017

P.S. 150 Charles James Fox
Elementary 12X150
920 East 167th St.
Bronx
NY 10459

Principal: Edwin Irizarry

Dates of Review:
December 20, 2016 - December 21, 2016

Lead Reviewer: Daisy Concepción
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. 150 Charles James Fox 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**

### Instructional Core

<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>1.1 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>Proficient</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>Developing</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2.2 Align assessments to curricula, use on-going assessment and grading practices, and analyze information on student learning outcomes to adjust instructional decisions at the team and classroom levels</td>
<td>Area of Focus</td>
<td>Developing</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
### School Quality Ratings continued

#### School Culture

**To what extent does the school...**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Area</th>
<th>Rating</th>
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</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>
</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>
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</tbody>
</table>

#### Systems for Improvement

**To what extent does the school...**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Area</th>
<th>Rating</th>
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<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>
</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>
</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>
</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>
</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>
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</tbody>
</table>
Area of Celebration

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Quality Indicator:</th>
<th>1.4 Positive Learning Environment</th>
<th>Rating:</th>
<th>Well Developed</th>
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Findings

The school’s belief that it takes a village to raise a child is implemented through various teams who have created structures so that each student is known well by groups of adults.

Impact

Social workers, deans, and teachers are working cooperatively to provide students with advisement supports that impact their personal and academic behaviors and ensure that they are meaningfully involved, improving both their school and community.

Supporting Evidence

- In a meeting, students shared that there is a ladder of support for them individually and/or as groups of students and that there is always at least three people who know them well and whom they can count on for support and advisement. Student stated that they are known well by their classroom teacher, the social worker that is assigned to their grade and their assistant principal. Additionally, students shared that the school has created a cluster of “safe spaces” that they can self-select to go to as a way of self-regulating anxiety or stress, rather than engaging in disruptive behavior. Students shared that because they feel safe and that there are always adults available to help, this allows them to focus on their class work.

- Students stated that classrooms are student-centered, thus allowing them to take risks and refine their work. One student shared multiple revisions of an essay along with extensive teacher feedback, leading to the final essay. She said, “This essay was not easy and I had to keep rewriting it. I felt comfortable with my teacher and I knew that she wanted to help me get a better grade. I did not quit. I persisted until I learned what I needed to do, and look, I got a good grade. This happened because our teachers care about us and about our work.”

- Some students related that they are part of the student council, and specifically spoke about one of the meetings focused on school improvement. Specifically they addressed adding many activities for spirit week and setting aside a week focused on random acts of kindness. In addition, as the school has a large percentage of students in temporary housing who need support, student council members discussed how to lend support, and subsequently students collected money and made donations so that their peers would have school supplies and Christmas presents.

- During two student meetings, students stated that giving back to the community is an essential part and value of the school. They shared that they participate in coat drives, collect food for City Harvest, and collect money for St. Jude Hospital. One student stated that although they did not have a lot, part of the mission of the school is to be involved in helping, supporting, and giving back to their neighborhood and community.

- Family workers and social workers who attend grade level conferences provide a holistic view of struggling students as a way of understanding their obstacles and the impact on their academic work. This partnership between teachers and guidance personnel results in personalized supports that include academic intervention, at-risk services, as well as outside referrals to a variety of community services, as a way to support the student and family and allow the student to focus on academics. In a small group meeting students stated that the supports that social workers and teachers provide helps them feel confident to take risks in school no matter how challenging the work or the problems are because they know that there are people committed to their success and well-being.
Findings
School leaders are developing the use of common assessments including an online program that measures student achievement towards mastery of standards and an assessment of student-reading levels. Across classrooms, teachers’ assessments inconsistently reflect the use of ongoing checks for understanding.

Impact
Results from the common assessments are not consistently used to adjust curriculum and instruction. There are few checks for understanding in classrooms, and when they are used, they do not always result in effective adjustments to meet student-learning needs.

Supporting Evidence

- While school leaders unpacked State assessment data and identified those standards for which students were not meeting grade-level expectations, there is little evidence that teachers are addressing these findings. Grade four team meeting notes evidence that school administrators met with teachers to share the State assessments findings, including that place value understanding and properties of operations to perform multi-digit arithmetic, specifically multiplication, are a major cluster on the exam and an area where the students have the greatest difficulty. This finding was also reflected in the school baseline for grade four, however, there was no evidence of data relative to this finding being tracked, nor was there evidence of curricular adjustments to address the data. This process of not tracking data aligned to findings was true of other testing grades in the school. In addition, while online common assessments track student performance on specific standards, there is no schoolwide focus on the standards, but rather a schoolwide focus on students at proficiency levels 3 and 4 on the State exam. As a result of not addressing yearlong data trends, proficiency levels in math have flat lined or dropped a level.

- Three times a year students in grades three to five participate in a grade level common assessment in both English Language Arts, (ELA), and math, using an online assessment platform. Students in these grades are also assessed in pre- and post-math unit exams and an on-demand writing assessment in ELA. All students in grades kindergarten to five are also evaluated using running records. While many grades administered and scored the pre- and post-unit assessments as well as the on-demand writing pieces, the results were not analyzed to measure student progress towards goals or to adjust curriculum. Teachers rely on the on-line program to create instructional groupings to address discrete skills.

- Checks for understanding were observed only in three of nine classrooms visited and involved thumbs-up, or choral agreement. While this type of assessment may be appropriate to gauge lesson pacing, this kind of checks for understanding does not allow teachers to gauge where in the process students are losing meaning or what content students are not understanding. In a science class studying magnetism, the teacher noticed that some students were struggling with making their circuit boards function. She went to each table and spoke with groups of students. She noticed that there was a lack of clarity and stopped the science investigation to ask students to explain the relationship between magnets and electricity. Two students responded by describing the method that they were using. Three students replied by sharing some of their observations, but no student could articulate the relationship between magnets and electricity. When fifteen students were asked individually to share the relationship between magnets and electricity, or the hypothesis for the investigation, students were unable to provide an answer. The teacher summarized by asking students if the compass needle moved when circling a magnet around the compass. She received a choral yes. The teacher asked if, at those tables where the circuit worked, the compass needle moved, and students replied with a choral yes. She then asked if this meant that there was similarity between magnets and electricity and she received a choral yes as well. She then concluded the lesson without explaining the relationship or objective of this lesson.

12X150: December 20, 2016
Findings

School leaders have adopted various Common Core-aligned curricula including a new program focused on strengthening writing. Teachers craft rigorous tasks that consistently emphasize higher-order thinking.

Impact

Purposeful curricula decisions focus on academic language and higher-order thinking across grades and subjects for all students.

Supporting Evidence

- As the school’s ELA curriculum allowed for only small constructed responses and not a completed argument or informational essay, school leaders have adopted an English curriculum that allows students to go through the writing process and complete essays that require students to write an essay from start to finish using evidence to support their claims.

- In second grade unit students explore the topic of urban and rural living through the use of two mentor texts, a fiction text called *The House on Maple St* and the non-fiction text, *One the Farm*. Students examine text structures in this unit to understand text features, sequencing, temporal words, and the ways in which illustration works as a support. At the end of this unit, students produce a non-fiction book based on their own experience. Students must demonstrate the ability to engage the reader, organize the information into parts using headings, provide information, and description, while ensuring that all facts and details support the main concept. This level of rigor is expected for all students and the unit provides strategies for English Language Learners (ELLs), and students with individualized education plans, by providing graphic organizers, supplemental-leveled texts, word banks, sentence starters, and a modified checklist for organization.

- For a fourth grade science unit students study the properties of electricity and magnetism by engaging in investigations that allow them to identify conductors and insulators, and understand properties of magnets and electricity by creating simple open- and closed-circuits. Students are expected to be able to demonstrate an understanding of the principles of a circuit and the relationship between magnetism and electricity.

- A second grade social studies unit involves students studying migration to New York City. Students study the push/pull factors for immigration and learn about life in New York City for early immigrants. Students read various primary and secondary sources documenting the lives of different immigrant groups such as the Chinese, the Jewish, and the Italian immigrants, and compare the experience of immigrant groups to the experience of modern day immigrants. Students write expository essays using various primary and secondary sources to inform others about the immigration experience.

- A review of teachers’ English Language Arts, (ELA), and planning documents shows a consistent focus on academic vocabulary, the use of annotations, and close readings. Across all subjects student are expected to use a variety of texts and use text-based evidence for their reasoning and explanations. Math planning documents demonstrate a focus on academic vocabulary, the use of mental computations, and math strategies, to demonstra conceptual understanding. Students are expected to be able to provide reasons for their thinking and be able to critique the reasoning of others. This shows school leaders attention to the integration of the instructional shifts across content areas.
Additional Finding

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<tr>
<th>Quality Indicator:</th>
<th>1.2 Pedagogy</th>
<th>Rating:</th>
<th>Developing</th>
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Findings

Scaffolds and questioning strategies, including visual supports and graphic organizers, inconsistently provide multiple entry points into the curriculum. Student work products and discussion reflect limited student thinking and participation.

Impact

As a result, there are uneven levels of student participation and some students are unable to demonstrate higher-order thinking in either work products or class discussions.

Supporting Evidence

- Students in a grade five class, who were grouped according to the previous day’s assessment, worked on a math investigation on multiplying decimals and whole numbers by creating models to show multiplication of whole numbers and decimals. Some students colored in rows of cubes on worksheets representing rows of base ten rods. Others worked at different areas around the room on word problems. All students were heard providing reasons for their answers such as the placement of their decimal point or describing the relationship of numbers such as 0.68 as one hundredth of 68 or 0.01x68. However, in a grade three self-contained special education class, students were unable to complete the task, lacking an understanding of both a text that was above their readability level and how to use the graphic organizer, a Venn diagram, provided to record information. Most students sat silently, unable to begin writing their informational report drafts. A few students, who were working with the teacher, were prompted throughout the task, but when left to complete the work independently, appeared to be confused and were not able to continue with the activity.

- In a second grade social studies class studying immigration to New York City (NYC), the teacher elicited reasons why people would leave their country to come to NYC. Students volunteered information such as, “I have a claim. People come so that they can help get money to help their families at home.” The teacher listed all student responses on the board and then gave students texts on the different immigrant groups that came to NYC and asked students to focus on population shifts and settlement in NYC. Students were observed taking notes and engaging in discussion of the text. However, this kind of engagement was not seen in a first grade class studying modes of transportation. Students viewed different pictures such as a schooner, a steam ship, and a cruise ship, and completed a “photograph analysis organizer” to answer the question, “How did transportation make our lives better?” Students drew and labeled pictures and photographs using a graphic organizer to show their thinking, however students were not able to answer questions about changes in transportation or how it improved people’s lives.

- In a fourth grade bilingual math class conducted in Spanish, all students engaged in conversation at their tables about how to use multiplication as a check for division. Students used academic vocabulary such as units, products, dividends, and factors, as they critiqued each other’s answers or strategy for solving word problems. Students encouraged each other to demonstrate higher-order thinking by showing multiple approaches to solving problems. This level of engagement was not seen in other classes. In a first grade class students copied pictures from the text Thomas-A Seven Year Old Boy from Peru. While the students had organizers and prompts at the table, they were struggling to lift details from the story to generate the main idea and their products demonstrated that they were not able to write the main idea. Similarly, in a kindergarten math class, the teacher modeled ways to make the number nine using different counters. She modeled both the numerical and spelling form of the number nine. She asked groups of student to go to their tables. Once at the tables, students rushed to complete the task. When questioned, many students could neither articulate nor demonstrate their understanding of the number concept they were working on.

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Supporting Evidence

Findings

School leaders consistently communicate high expectations to the entire staff. High expectations are also communicated to families in support of helping them with their children following a path to be college and career ready.

Impact

School systems and structures hold teachers accountable to meeting its expectations. School leaders, teachers, and guidance personnel, ensure that there is ongoing feedback to families that creates an understanding of the school’s high expectations.

• School leaders use various methods of communication with staff including a staff handbook, emails, memoranda, and grade-level conferences. A review of communication documents evidences the school’s expectation that teachers use various common assessments to instructionally group students. Additionally, expectations for classrooms include greeting students as they enter the room and social/emotional supports that include praise and building confidence. There are also expectations that teachers use a variety of Depth of Knowledge questions in their lesson and that they provide appropriate scaffolds so that students are able to demonstrate higher-order thinking. A review of teacher observations, aligned to the Danielson Framework for Teaching, shows that teachers are held accountable to these expectations. In one observation, a teacher is commended for “praising students in a manner that creates a comfort level and engages them in the lesson.” While the observation recognizes that the lesson included scaffolds and instructional grouping based on school data, the teacher is provided with feedback inclusive of clear expectations for instruction. The teacher’s practice was further pushed by the comment, “Although the students were grouped by reading levels, and you provided students with a Venn diagram, think of differentiated activities that will address the content/concept being taught for each group according to their needs.” Feedback also went on to state that there was only one scaffold and it did not meet all of the student needs. A review of a number of observation reports reflected this same level of attention.

• In a teacher meeting, teachers stated that they participate in extensive professional development both on- and off-site. Teachers attend writing workshops at a major university every four to six weeks. A math consultant comes to the school and provides support with planning and with the delivery of instruction. Additionally, teachers receive assistance from the literacy coach and the staff developer. Teachers are held accountable to planning to meet student needs through common planning sessions attended by school leaders. Additionally, school leaders review regularly and hold one-on-one instructional/data conferences with each teacher, three times a year.

• Parents shared there are various modes of communication used by school leaders to inform them of school expectations. They further added that there have been many sessions on understanding the Common Core and the school’s curricula, and that they use related web-based programs. Parents referenced the schoolwide focus on increasing rigor, spoke about the school’s new writing program, and stated that college awareness day and virtual tours of colleges are followed by discussion with students on preparing them for middle school that includes visits. Parents credited social and emotional supports and the school’s use of social workers and family workers as providing assistance to families in crisis, serving as instructional pillars that allow students and families to focus on education. They shared that their children are willing to engage in challenging work because they feel cared for and encouraged to succeed. As community involvement is one of the school’s core values, families who are very active in drives and collections to support the neediest in the community feel that the community activism is part of a path to college and career readiness and necessary to create well-rounded students.
**Additional Finding**

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

**Findings**

The majority of teachers are engaged in vertically- or horizontally-structured professional collaborations that promote school goals and the implementation of the Common Core Learning Standards. Distributive leadership structures support teacher and leadership development.

**Impact**

Professional learning collaboration such as building writing units and inquiry work have strengthened teachers’ instructional capacity. Teachers’ voice in key decisions affect student learning.

**Supporting Evidence**

- In a meeting with teachers, they shared that, as many of them are new to the grade they have had to learn a new set of grade appropriate standards. A vertical team of teachers attends professional development at a university to support the newly adopted writing program. This vertical team makes decisions on how to design units so that they align across the grades. Teachers from this vertical team go back to their grade-level team and share information. The grade level team then begins to unpack the unit and write lessons for their grade, with the support of the school literacy teacher and staff developer. These opportunities to plan have helped teachers gain an understanding of how the Common Core standards build across grades and content areas. Additionally, a review of the school’s common planning minutes, mentoring plans, as well as coaches’ logs, all demonstrate that teachers are involved in structured inquiry where they look at student work in order to understanding the math and literacy standards and use the data in their planning. Teachers also look at student work in order to refine lessons and rubrics to reflect the standards for their grade and to provide differentiated instruction to meet the needs of their students.

- During a teacher team meeting, teachers use a protocol to examine completed student math tasks on the use of decimals in word problems. Teachers categorized samples into high, medium, and low performance level, before selecting the performance level to examine. Teachers described what the student was able to do and identified common errors. Teachers noticed that students were able to underline key language needed to set up the problem correctly and calculate the subtraction needed to show the difference, what the problem was asking. Teachers noticed two types of student errors. One student challenge was borrowing from zero and forgetting to factor this into the math and the other was in checking two-step problems. Teachers identified areas in the curriculum and standards where these lessons appeared. As a re-teach, teachers decided to address the concept of borrowing from zero using the online assessment program. Teachers also created lessons on how to perform math checks on multi-step problems Decisions made during this team meeting aligned with the school goals of ensuring that teachers revisited and understood standards and the use of the online program as a way of providing students with supplemental independent practice of skills.

- A review of teacher surveys demonstrates that there is a structure in place to ensure teacher voice. Teacher stated that they have been able to select manipulatives for their grades, decide which outside professional development to attend, and adjust curriculum. One teacher stated that students in grade three were having difficulty setting up an argument based on the readings in the curriculum. Teachers decided that students would understand argument better if it were based on something that applied to life. Teachers created a unit on nutrition and asked the students to consider whether chocolate milk should be banned from the school lunchroom. Students set up exit polls in the cafeteria and collected data as part of the evidence for their argument for their essays. Teachers have also added lessons around community activism to support the school’s core values. Teachers have recently asked that school leaders hire a math coach as an additional support, and at the time of this review, the principal indicated he is in the process of hiring a math coach.