Quality Review Report

2016-2017

P.S. 159 Luis Munoz Marin Biling

Elementary 10X159

2315 Washington Ave.
Bronx
NY 10458

Principal: Luis Liz

Dates of Review:
February 10, 2017 and February 14, 2017

Lead Reviewer: Marion Wilson
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. 159 Luis Munoz Marin Biling 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

### Instructional Core

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>To what extent does the school...</th>
<th>Area</th>
<th>Rating</th>
</tr>
</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>Area of Focus</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>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>Additional Finding</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>Developing</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>Developing</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Area of Celebration

| Quality Indicator | 1.4 Positive Learning Environment | Rating: | Well Developed |

Findings

The school’s approach to culture building, discipline, and social-emotional support is informed by their theory of action about educating the whole child. There are morning meetings and a small teacher to student ratio that allows daily interactions between adults and staff.

Impact

As a result, there are fewer incidents in the school, and student government members have ample opportunities to contribute ideas of change that support school improvement efforts. Small staff to student ratio helps staff personalize attendance, guidance, and youth development for every student that also impacts students’ personal and academic behavior in a positive manner.

Supporting Evidence

- School leaders believe that mutual respect is an important element of the culture of their school community. They also articulated that they believe when students are nurtured and treated respectfully as citizens of the school’s community then they will be productive and successful. Both adults and students shared that the discipline code is used to ensure that students understand the consequences for infractions to school rules helps the school’s climate and culture to be positive and conducive to student learning. There are also many reward systems in place to acknowledge when students make good choices and positive decision-making. School staff host regular assembly programs, offer pizza parties, and recognize a student-of-the-month from each class. As a result, the school has seen fewer incidents of negative behavior and interactions between students and staff. For example, there are fewer incidents of students breaking school rules because students want to attend the various trips and programs available to them as a result of their positive behavior. Students work cooperatively with one another in groups during class, transition between classes in an orderly fashion, and are respectful when speaking to adults.

- Students from various grades comprise the Student Government Association (SGA). These student leaders and representatives meet with the principal on a regular basis to discuss items of mutual importance. For example, fifth grade students learned that there were some lower grade students struggling with reading, their SGA decided to conduct read-alouds based on the character education theme of the week. Students shared that by reading to their younger counterparts, by making posters to advertise spirit week or by inviting guest speakers they help make the school a better learning environment. During the large group student meeting, students shared that they know that the younger students want to be just like them so they wanted to bridge the gap and spend more time with them in their classrooms. As a result, this partnership between upper and lower elementary students has helped to foster better relationships between students and has even helped with deterring any potential discipline issues in the cafeteria.

- School staff ensure that they keep track of students who display chronic absence, lateness, or disruptive behavior. Since the school is a small school, each adult is responsible for knowing students on a personal level. Outreach is done to ensure that students attend school on a regular basis. Students receive attendance awards and medals for perfect attendance and improved attendance. The guidance counselor plays a critical role in providing both mandated and non-mandated counseling for at-risk students. This has resulted in students making better decisions and results in an inclusive culture for all students and progress towards school goals for a supportive environment and attendance. Students shared there is always an adult available to speak to them, support them, and help them be respectful, honest, caring, responsible, and display good citizenship towards each other.
### Findings

School leaders and faculty are in the process of creating curricula and academic tasks that consistently emphasize higher-order thinking skills across all grades and subjects. Unit and lessons plans reflect planning of tasks and activities.

### Impact

Tasks provide students access to the curricula that are cognitively engaging for a diversity of learners. Tasks inconsistently incorporate rigorous habits across all grades and subjects especially for English Language Learners (ELLs) and students with disabilities.

### Supporting Evidence

- There are tasks, mostly in reading and math that are planned to challenge students to think critically and to provide effective instructional scaffolds to help ELLs and students with disabilities create meaningful work products independently. In one lesson plan, students were required to read, analyze, gather, and assess data in order to create a compare and contrast essay, comparing two texts while providing reasons that were supported by facts and details. In another math lesson plan, differentiated groups were sorted into those who needed support, those who were on grade, and those who needed enrichment. The activities listed in the plan referred to sections from the book but did not explicitly highlight what would be done to support the ELLs or students with disabilities. Most tasks required students to retell, to use text, to acknowledge differences, to describe characters, and to identify messages.

- Rigorous habits and higher order skills are inconsistently documented in curricula and academic tasks. There are some examples of tasks that require students to create their own meaning, to integrate skills into processes, and to use what they have learned to solve real world problems. A sample reading unit listed modifications for students including teacher-created graphic organizers, independent practice skills, and standard-leveled books for all students. In one math class, students were asked to analyze word problems by using a strategy. Students had a choice of which group to work with while utilizing manipulatives, such as ten frames, and number lines. Students worked cooperatively to figure out problems using information from anchor charts, boxing and underlining key words. Students supported each other with thinking through how to solve and writing down their strategy in words before solving. Students were engaged, and supports for ELLs and students with disabilities were readily available so they could complete the task. These strategies were not evident across most classrooms visited, which were teacher-centered.

- Some teachers use information from state assessments and other data to make minimal adjustments to curricula planning documents. There is some evidence to provide a data-based rationale for the work provided for students, including ELLs and students with disabilities, so that they are cognitively engaged at a consistent level with the needed supports. Some teacher-plans for math and reading were lifted directly from the teachers’ guides with little to no customization to meet the needs of the school’s diverse learners. One plan contained unit numbers, standards, essential question of the chapter but did not have a plan on how the teacher would teach the lesson or how she or he would support the learning of ELLs and students with disabilities.
Additional Finding

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

Findings

Across some classrooms, teaching strategies include questioning, scaffolds, and multiple entry points into the curricula. Student work products and discussions are uneven across classrooms.

Impact

Students with disabilities and ELLs are inconsistently cognitively engaged in lessons and sometimes do not have supports and scaffolds to help them work independently. There are uneven levels of student thinking and participation across some classrooms.

Supporting Evidence

- There are some instructional groups in classes that are based on reading levels, student behavior, and teacher observation for most classes. Some groups also help to build on student strengths and areas of growth with particular attention paid to helping ELLs and students with disabilities be cognitively engaged. Teaching strategies try to incorporate varied levels of Depth of Knowledge (DOK) questions, technology supports, graphic organizers, picture cues, and leveled text to provide multiple entry points into lessons and tasks for a diversity of learners. For example, in a class with students with disabilities, students were playing a domino game but couldn’t read the instructions on how to complete the task. While they were supposed to be working in groups to support each other, students worked independently by racing to complete blank worksheet templates without checks to see whether their work was accurate.

- Across some classrooms, teachers use scaffolds and prompts to challenge students cognitively, promote high-level thinking and discourse. Some teachers use strategies help students make connections among concepts or previously learned material to arrive at new levels of understanding of complex material. In a kindergarten class visited, students were grouped according to their NYSELAT level. Teachers worked with small groups while other groups worked independently. Students were not clear about the learning task, but tried to complete the graphic organizer. While there were visual materials and anchor and reference charts for students to refer to, students were looking at pictures and were not able to engage with a text to meaningfully complete the task about identifying the main topic of their informational text.

- Some classrooms afford students ample opportunity to produce work and to engage in discussions that reflect critical thinking, reasoning, innovation, and problem solving. Some work products and conversations reflect students’ use of academic vocabulary and evidence-based accountable talk stems. There were missed opportunities for students to engage in student-centered conversation. Some students were able to articulate what they were working on and why it is important for them to learn the material, while others repeated rote activities. In one math class, students were picking dominoes from a bin and writing down an addition sentence and then solving the equation. Students were completing sheet after sheet in a literacy class, students and were asked to compare and contrast two natural phenomena. Students working independently had to research and decide whether being in an earthquake or volcano was more challenging to deal with. Students discussed their thinking and pushed each other to cite evidence to support their thoughts. However the small groups working with the teacher were not afforded opportunities to make inferences or to respond to higher-order thinking questions.
Additional Finding

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

Findings

Across classrooms, teachers create assessments, and utilize rubrics and grading policies that are aligned curricula resources. Teachers use the results from common assessments to determine student progress towards goals across grades.

Impact

Rubrics and checklists across most subject areas provide actionable feedback to students and teachers regrading student achievement. The results from common math and reading assessments are used to adjust curricula and instructional practices.

Supporting Evidence

- School staff help to train students on how to use rubrics and to create their own rubrics based on the curricula. Most students shared that they receive actionable feedback when they confer with their teacher and/or on their work products through “glows and grows” or strengths and next steps. Students further shared that this helps them to understand how they are performing in relation to the standards. Teachers also shared that they use information from rubric scores to gauge student understanding of the material taught. For example, second grade teachers created a worksheet that contained both the reading and writing standards being focused on within a particular unit. Teachers tracked student understanding of their ability to ask and answer questions, to retell themes, to evaluate author’s point of view, and to be able to explain story elements. Teachers realized that they needed a plan during the mini-lesson and guided reading groups to reinforce student understanding in the targeted and tested standards rather than teaching the skill to the whole class.

- Teachers and school leaders choose assessments that are aligned to the Common Core and/or content standards and offer data to help them improve instructional practices. Most teachers collaborate on creating and modifying performance tasks, quizzes, and curricula-generated assessments to try to address student needs. Tools, such as iReady diagnostic exams, are administered to students in both reading and math. These standards-aligned assessment data is used to plan interventions for small group instruction. Teachers also use ongoing assessment checklists based on the Common Core to track progress towards goals across most grades and subjects and to make instructional decisions. For example, most teachers utilize a reading assessment checklist to monitor reading behaviors and to determine student progress towards reading on grade level. This information is then used to notice, teach, and support students based on their specific reading levels. The school is continuing to revise rubrics to ensure that all teachers provide meaningful feedback to students.

- Teacher teams agree on student learning goals and benchmark data in order to design formative and summative assessments to measure student progress. Teachers use assessment data to gather information on students’ progress relative to their needs and goals. The school has an individual student profile snapshot tool that allows teachers to observe student progress, or lack thereof during periodic intervals. Information is based on math assessment results, running records and other classroom data. This information is then sorted and color-coded to help teachers identify which students are making progress or need additional support. During the teacher meeting, teachers shared that they monitor student progress using Fountas and Pinnell (F&P) data, fluency checklists, weekly spelling and vocabulary tests, pre- and post-unit assessments, conferring with students, standard rubrics, and teacher-designed rubrics across content areas.
### Additional Finding

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

#### Findings

School leaders consistently communicate high expectations and other elements of the Danielson *Framework for Teaching* to staff. School staff effectively communicate with families so they serve as learning partners.

#### Impact

School leaders and staff provide training and support for one another that results in a culture of mutual accountability for the communicated high expectations. School faculty create successful partnerships with families by providing ongoing support for student progress towards expectations.

#### Supporting Evidence

- School leaders have an elevated level of expectations for staff, which is evidenced throughout the school community through both written and verbal structures. There are new teacher orientations, ongoing workshops, a staff handbook, and one-on-one conversations that promote a culture where accountability is reciprocal among all constituents. The principal sends a weekly bulletin out to staff that contains information on the expectations for student work, read-alouds, guided reading and math groups, as well as that focuses on the five pillars of reading within the literacy block.

- The school has clearly defined standards for professional development that include professional development plans that incorporate staff input and classroom practices as well as the embedded elements of the Danielson *Framework for Teaching*. Teachers receive a Principal's Memo following professional development sessions and with the expected next steps for classroom practice. A sample memorandum outlined for teachers the importance of data collection based on the Danielson *Framework for Teaching*, component 3d, “Providing Feedback to Students.” Teachers shared that they have had subsequent training sessions from the field support center and their peers to better help their understanding of different types of assessments. There were key questions that teachers had to consider during professional learning and while teaching. Subsequent memoranda also addressed these expectations and the intended next steps for conferring, collecting data and giving students feedback on their work. Teachers shared that this highlight helps them strengthen their practice while also being able to rely on administration and their peers to help them achieve the stated expectations.

- School faculty provide ongoing, clear lines of verbal and written communication to families in both Spanish and English. These tools include, but are not limited to, online tools, monthly progress reports, parent-teacher conferences, a parent handbook, and prompting questions for parents to ask teachers. The school’s open door policy allows parents to visit at any point during the day to receive real-time information about their children. Communication between the school and home helps to deepen parents’ understanding of college and career readiness expectations for their children and to empower them to support their children in meeting or exceeding those expectations. Parents shared that Class Dojo helps them communicate with teachers. Teachers also keep parent involvement logs with next steps for parents to support their children’s work and behavior at home with specific steps. There are newsletters that provide parents with information about the curriculum and upcoming events. For example, parents are given access to reading materials that students will cover and also receive tools and tips to help students practice math and reading fluency, and conduct research. Parents receive information about their children’s test scores with the skills they need to focus on to move to the next level.
Additional Finding

| Quality Indicator: | 4.2 Teacher Teams and Leadership Development | Rating: Proficient |

Findings

Teacher teams consistently analyze assessment data and student work for students. There are distributed leadership structures in place across the school.

Impact

As a result of the work of teacher teams, pedagogical practices are improving and groups of students are making progress towards stated goals. Teachers have built leadership capacity and have a voice in key decisions that affect student learning across the school.

Supporting Evidence

- Teacher teams monitor multiple forms of student data that help them to incorporate more effective teaching strategies to help groups of students increase their math and reading levels. For example, teacher teams are focused on looking at data to monitor student progress during guided reading instruction. After lessons are taught, teachers review notes about students’ reading behavior and then modify techniques they use based on this data in relation to the results of the recently administered Gates-MacGinitie Reading Test (GMRT). The results are compiled in a spreadsheet that helps provide guidance to teachers in planning instruction, intervention, and enrichment based on the students’ test results. Teachers were then able to re-teach and focus on isolated tested skills that students needed more support in, such as in determining the meaning of unfamiliar words, making inferences, or drawing conclusions.

- Teacher teams look at the results from the analysis of student work products including writing samples, math chapter tests, performance tasks, and running records to adjust their small group instructional plans and also to revise goals for students. During one of the teacher team meetings, teachers shared that they try to look at multiple forms of student assessment data to track progress towards goals for groups of students. School staff identified those functioning in the bottom third of the school in reading and collect periodic data to monitor how they are performing in relation to key standards. Teachers regularly review the data for these groups of students to ensure they are moving along the continuum. On a school-created profile sheet for tracking students, a significant number of students increased their performance by at least one to two levels. Most teachers also review similar information in math.

- Teachers offer examples of the various times that they are able to play a role in school-level decision making. For example, during the teacher team question and answer, teachers shared that the principal makes them feel like they are his equals as opposed to emphasizing the supervisory nature of their relationship. Teachers shared that they have the freedom and flexibility to design their own lessons, teach their classes, and contribute ideas that lead to school change. Teachers are asked to volunteer to serve on various committees throughout the school. During the teacher team meeting, teachers remarked that since they have a small school, staff members consider each other like family and this atmosphere enables them to serve in many capacities when called upon to display teacher leadership. Teachers coordinate trips and activities, suggest new curricula and programs, and discuss and implement ideas that will best serve the needs of their students.