Quality Review Report

2016-2017

P.S. 161 Juan Ponce De Leon School
Elementary 07X161
628 Tinton Ave.
Bronx
NY 10455

Principal: Eliamrie Soto

Dates of Review:
March 23, 2017 - March 24, 2017

Lead Reviewer: Buffie Whitfield
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. 161 Juan Ponce De Leon School 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></td>
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</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>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>Additional Finding</td>
<td>Proficient</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
## School Culture

*To what extent does the school...*  

<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</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>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

## Systems for Improvement

*To what extent does the school...*  

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<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>Area of Celebration</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>Area of Focus</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>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
**Area of Celebration**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Quality Indicator:</th>
<th>1.3 Leveraging Resources</th>
<th>Rating:</th>
<th>Proficient</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>

**Findings**

The leadership makes strategic organizational decisions, such as those regarding technology and staffing, that support the school’s instructional goals, respond to student needs, and provide access to learning opportunities.

**Impact**

Resources support students, including English Language Learners (ELLs), and strategic programming impacts student outcomes including work products. All members of the school community, including leaders, directly interact with students to support access to learning opportunities.

**Supporting Evidence**

- The principal’s investment in instructional technology enhances learning in all core subjects with the acquisition of SmartBoards. This organizational decision results in enhanced opportunities for teachers to model for students and the incorporation of technology such as videos which was evident during the review. Students were using the SMART boards to work out math problems. Additional teaching materials for science and math, which incorporate the new technology tools, allow students to discuss videos on non-fiction themes in science, social studies, and English Language Arts.

- In a key organizational decision, two assistant principals also serve as coaches for pre-kindergarten to grade two and the other assistant principal for grades three to five. English Language Arts and math academic intervention teachers are assigned to all grades to provide early intervention and intensive instruction to students, including English Language Learners (ELLs), helping to close the achievement gap. Consequently, focusing additional teachers and staff for schoolwide, targeted support has resulted in positive student achievement as seen in assessment binders, progress reports, and conference notes.

- Due to the principal's resourcefulness, she is able to create targeted intervention and also provide her community with a dual language program. Leaders have structured “frozen time” from 9:35 A.M. to 10:05 A.M. daily where every teacher works with a small group to target students' specific needs. Paraprofessionals also have been trained using Reading Rescue, a literacy intervention program. This is helping to close the achievement gap evidenced by the volume of writing and increased reading comprehension levels of students. Additionally, the school’s dual language program is offered from pre-kindergarten to grade five and follows the 50/50 alternate day model, with teachers providing alternate day instruction in English and Spanish.
Findings
The school is developing its structures for the majority of teachers to collaboratively engage in inquiry work, including the analysis of student work and student data.

Impact
The impact of teacher teams has yet to reach the instructional practices of the majority of teachers, thus limiting opportunities for increased student learning.

Supporting Evidence

- Teacher team members collaborate on activities such as creating unit maps aligned to Common Core Learning Standards and instructional shifts. Teamwork is contributing to school goals such as the refinement of curricula for math. However, teacher reflections on their instruction and intervention moves indicate that measures of the impact of the work of the teams on student achievement are not yet refined. Teams are focused on gathering additional data to assess the impact of strategies used to date.

- During the observed team meeting, members of team listened to their colleagues share their perspectives about inquiry and steps to take to help students write a constructed response. Teachers reviewed student work and rated it on a rubric. There was a general discussion of the scores and characteristics of student responses as participants shared noticings. However, the discussion did not thoroughly analyze the task to guide an accurate assessment of student mastery of the skills involved. Furthermore, it was not clear what specific skills were an issue for each student and how interventions would be differentiated for students in each of the scoring categories shown on the report. The discussion was more focused on next steps than on the needs of individual students. When a teacher was asked about the impact of inquiry on teacher pedagogical practice, curriculum and the team thus far, the teacher shared that they are in the infancy stages with this work.

- Agendas collected from the grade four team indicate various topics discussed during meetings, such as content area bulletin boards, writing rubrics, math curriculum, and social studies and science teaching points. There was insufficient evidence of other teams engaging in inquiry-based collaboration analyzing student work or data that would result in moving specific sub-groups of students while also improving teachers' collective practice.
### Additional Finding

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Quality Indicator:</th>
<th>1.1 Curriculum</th>
<th>Rating:</th>
<th>Proficient</th>
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#### Findings

School leaders and faculty ensure that curricula are aligned to Common Core Learning Standards (CCLS) and integrate the instructional shifts and workshop model. Rigorous habits and higher-order skills are consistently emphasized across grades and subjects.

#### Impact

Curricula decisions, such as the selection of particular academic programs and the incorporation of word study, build coherence and promote college and career readiness by providing students access to higher-order skills.

#### Supporting Evidence

- The school has used the *Go Math!* program in kindergarten through fifth grade and has incorporated word study into the curricula. *Harcourt Mifflin* is used for social studies and *FOSS* is used for science. The school began using the Teacher College Reading and Writing Project (TCRWP) units to strengthen student performance in kindergarten through fifth grade in the areas of reading and writing. School leaders and teachers are unpacking the respective curriculum units to identify key shifts: building knowledge through content-rich nonfiction and informational texts; reading and writing grounded in evidence from the text; and regular practice with complex text and its academic vocabulary. Based on the analysis of last year’s English Language Arts (ELA) state assessment results and other formative data collected, the school made a purposeful decision to use these curriculum units steeped in CCLS and the instructional shifts. Evidence of the application of these curricula is seen in units and lesson plans reviewed.

- Across all content areas and grades, teacher plans reflect the components of the workshop model, where mini-lessons, guided practice, and independent or group tasks are clearly outlined to reflect the “I-do, we-do, you-do” paradigm. A grade two reading unit focused on close reading of fiction and non-fiction texts, tricky words, vocabulary comparisons of various texts, and making connections across texts.

- Unit plans and teacher lesson plans are aligned to specific CCLS and include essential questions. For example, in a grade five reading unit, an essential question was “How can I use all I have learned about research to tackle a topic?” In grade two social studies unit, the essential question was, “How does geography influence where people choose to live and why?”
Additional Finding

### Quality Indicator: 1.2 Pedagogy

| Rating: | Developing |

**Findings**

Across classrooms, teaching practices and strategies inconsistently include instructional strategies to provide appropriately challenging and rigorous learning opportunities that promote high achievement.

**Impact**

There is an uneven demonstration of higher-order thinking skills through student discussions, hindering student thinking, and participation.

**Supporting Evidence**

- To meet student needs, some teachers use scaffolding techniques such as graphic organizers and visual resources. For example, during an ELA class, the teacher reviewed strategies and gave students graphic organizers, but this practice was not consistent. Text-dependent questioning is articulated as a schoolwide approach and is emerging in practices across lessons based on the instructional shifts for ELA. In most classes there were groups of students discussing a common text. For instance, in a grade five classroom, students were engaged in evidence-based conversations about natural disasters by citing the facts from the text to support their responses to the questions. However, in most classrooms there was little evidence of discussions including text-based answers.

- Student-to-student interaction and discussion were inconsistent across the classrooms. Students who participated in class discussions by responding to teacher-generated questions are beginning to use a discussion rubric. In a few classes, students used turn and talk but did not generate text-specific responses.

- While students were afforded opportunities to engage in partnership discussions in some classrooms visited, there were uneven levels of student thinking and participation. In an English Language Arts class, the teacher asked students to turn and talk to compare and contrast texts. However, the conversation resulted in students being off track without any accountability to each other or the task. In a math class, the teacher worked with a group while other students worked independently. Some students in the teacher-led group did not share. Some students from the independent group were off-task.
### Findings

Across classrooms, teachers are using and creating assessments, rubrics, and grading policies aligned to the school’s curricula. Common assessments are used to track student progress towards goals across grades and subjects.

### Impact

The tracking of student data allows for actionable feedback to students and teachers regarding student achievement, and results are used for instructional adjustments to meet the needs of all learners.

### Supporting Evidence

- Teachers utilize various assessments, such as Fountas and Pinnell running records in kindergarten through fifth grade, NYC performance tasks, teacher developed pre- and post-assessments, and *Go Math!* Data from these are used to identify specific student academic levels. Moreover, end of unit writing assessments across grades are used to assess student progress in reaching their goals. Information from the assessments provides teachers with feedback regarding student mastery of the key standards and student achievement both individually and as a grade. Analysis of CCLS-aligned assessments results yields information about growth and gaps in student knowledge. The pre- and post-assessments inform students about their achievement and next steps for their learning and goals. The results from these assessments provide school leaders and teachers with item analysis data for each student. The analysis of this data is used to make instructional adjustments such as in purposeful grouping of students across the grades according to their reading and math levels. In addition, the school uses Fountas and Pinnell for ongoing monitoring and assessing students’ reading levels throughout the school year.

- Teachers provide feedback to students through conversations, during targeted conferences about their work, and in written comments that align to elements of task-specific rubrics. Feedback is evident within student portfolios and on work displayed in classrooms and hallway bulletin boards. Teachers provide the next steps and use rubrics to help students identify the criteria for improving their work. Rubrics are age appropriate, specifically in early childhood where they are written in student friendly language.

- During the student meeting, students across grades articulated and demonstrated how rubrics for writing provided feedback to self-assess and adjust their writing. Students from grades four and five added that they also receive feedback about their work from peers.
Additional Finding

| Quality Indicator: | 3.4 High Expectations | Rating: Proficient |

**Findings**
School leaders consistently communicate expectations to the entire staff. Teachers and staff establish a culture, Frozen Time, of learning that communicates expectations for students.

**Impact**
School administration is developing training and systems of accountability for the expectations communicated. School staff is developing the level of detail and clarity needed to help prepare middle school students for the next level.

**Supporting Evidence**
- School leaders communicate high levels of expectations to staff through a staff handbook and grade newsletters that incorporate components of the Danielson Framework for Teaching, Domain 3. The school leader also communicates high expectations to staff through her Frozen Time initiative, where all staff stops everything and works with students on their areas of need. School leaders provide training to support staff in meeting the professional expectations for teaching.

- Students are provided with various supports for preparing for the next level such as summative assessments (report cards), formative assessments (ongoing feedback), and discussions about higher education. When asked how the school prepares them for the next level, either middle school or college, a student replied, “I receive feedback from my teacher to help me improve.” Another stated, “My teacher talks about college and I want to attend Iowa State.” After this discourse, students shared their preferred secondary school and college choices.

- High expectations in the school stress the importance of reading to students, especially as it relates to academic success. During the meeting, students shared their favorite genres and books, such as *Lost in London*, the *Series of Unfortunate Events* books, *Number of Stars*, and the Harry Potter series. Some students stated they knew their reading levels. One student said, “I know reading is important now and when I get older.”