Quality Review Report
2016-2017

I.S. 229 Roland Patterson

Junior High-Intermediate-Middle 09X229

275 Harlem River Park Bridge
Bronx
NY 10453

Principal: Ezra Matthias

Dates of Review:
February 28, 2017 - March 1, 2017

Lead Reviewer: Adam Breier
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

I.S. 229 Roland Patterson serves students in grade 6 through grade 8. 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><em>To what extent does the school...</em></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1.1 Ensure engaging, rigorous, and coherent curricula in all subjects, accessible for a variety of learners and aligned to Common Core Learning Standards and/or content standards</td>
<td>Additional Finding</td>
<td>Developing</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1.2 Develop teacher pedagogy from a coherent set of beliefs about how students learn best that is informed by the instructional shifts and Danielson Framework for Teaching, aligned to the curricula, engaging, and meets the needs of all learners so that all students produce meaningful work products</td>
<td>Additional Finding</td>
<td>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 Celebration</td>
<td>Developing</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
### 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>Additional Finding</td>
<td>Developing</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>Developing</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>Developing</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>Developing</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>
<td>Underdeveloped</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>
**Findings**

Across classrooms, teachers use or create rubrics and grading policies that are loosely aligned with the school’s curricula. Common assessments are in place but results are inconsistently used to adjust instruction.

**Impact**

Feedback to students regarding student achievement is inconsistent and limited. Use of common assessment data is mainly used for programming courses and Academic Intervention Services (AIS) with limited impact on instructional adjustments.

**Supporting Evidence**

- Analysis of teachers’ written feedback to students reveals that teachers are inconsistently offering actionable feedback and that when offered, the scope of actionable feedback varies from low to high. Examples of actionable feedback include - directing a student to include a greater amount of details in supporting an argument, analyzing the evidence cited from a text, as well as ensuring that there is a direct connection between the evidence provided and the argument it is intended to support. However, another bulletin board of student work includes teacher comments that do not provide actionable feedback or next steps of any kind. Comments on this bulletin board summarize the work. For example, one comment reads, “Explanation correctly uses vocabulary words domain and range to show understanding of function.” Another example summarizes the student’s effort to correctly use a mapping diagram. Another bulletin board shares student writing around a task involving the reading of two separate biographical texts and noting similarities and differences between the texts’ subjects. Student work on this bulletin board includes actionable feedback. However, this feedback focuses on writing mechanics and fails to address students’ understanding of the subjects or of how to compare and contrast. Examples of feedback from this bulletin board asks students to correct their spelling, make sure they place an appropriate amount of space between words, and write neatly.

- School leaders distribute a spreadsheet student data tool to teachers. This tool combines student achievement data collected from a variety of State and school-based common assessments as well as attendance and other student demographic data. Information from this data pool is used by teachers in determining student groupings. New York State English as a Second Language Achievement Test (NYSESLAT) data analysis revealed a need to strengthen support for English Language Learners’ (ELLs) writing. As a result, the decision was made to adopt a systematic method for teaching critical thinking through argumentative writing that is being implemented for all ELL students.

- State math assessment data was used to identify trends in student need. As a result of this analysis, a cohort of students was programmed for a specific math class titled Math Skills; the class includes instruction targeted to student need. Additionally, data from State and school-based common assessments was used in order to appropriately group students for the academic intervention services (AIS) program. This program is voluntary for students with a limited capacity for impact.
Findings

A minority of teachers are engaged in structured professional collaborations on teams. Teacher teams do not typically analyze assessment data and student work.

Impact

The work of teacher teams has not fostered collaborations resulting in increased student achievement. Teacher team meetings do not lead to shared improvements in teacher practice or goals for groups of students.

Supporting Evidence

- A minority of teachers are engaged in a structured professional collaboration that has conducted inquiry-based work. The math team met and reviewed data from a fellow math teacher’s class, including students’ results on prior class-based assessments as well as common assessments such as State exam data and results from a series of common math assessments used across the school. Teachers also reviewed results from the most recent in-class assessment and using a protocol, discussed various options that the teacher could explore in order to help raise the success for the lowest achieving students in his class. Examples of next steps suggested by team members were for the teacher to plan for different sets of activities for groups, based on students’ achievement level, design and administer an assessment that focused on the two types of problems with which students struggled in order to establish a new benchmark, and to specifically instruct students to show their work in the future so that future analyses can reveal the step(s) at which students struggled the most. This meeting represented the only teacher team meeting that occurred throughout this school year for which evidence revealed that student work had been analyzed.

- The math team presented the results of an action plan to the faculty earlier in the school year. This presentation informed the audience that the team’s objective for the year would be to provide students with strategies to independently solve addition and subtraction computations with fractions. The focus populations were shared along with the specific goals for each population subgroup. This presentation also included observations that most students made anticipated errors and failed to attempt the do now questions prior to the interventions delivered. Math teacher team agendas reveal that meetings held earlier in this school year involved discussions over differentiation practices, planning inter-visitations, and using Webb’s Depth of Knowledge tool and Bloom’s Taxonomy for the question design.

- Review of math teacher team agendas, along with agendas for the grades six, seven, and eight teacher teams reveals that they are meeting to commonly plan lessons. These teams do not conduct inquiry work involving the analysis of student work or data and have not identified student subgroups for which an area of academic concern can be addressed and student growth monitored.
Findings
School leaders and faculty are in the process of aligning curricula to Common Core Learning Standards, content standards, and the instructional shifts. Rigorous habits and higher-order skills are inconsistently emphasized across curricula.

Impact
While pacing calendars and lesson plans show evidence of alignment to the Common Core, there is uneven integration of the instructional shifts across grade levels and content areas. Additionally, a majority of curricular documents evidence an inconsistent focus on rigorous instruction for students of all levels, including English Language Learners (ELLs) and students with disabilities.

Supporting Evidence

- Although pacing calendars and lesson plans evidence Common Core alignment, there is uneven integration with the instructional shifts. In a grade seven English language arts (ELA) lesson plan, students are tasked with evaluating claims about *To Kill A Mockingbird* by determining if the available evidence could be used to support them. A grade eight lesson plan shows the balance between fiction and non-fiction as students explore whether Harper Lee used the murder story of Emmett Till to inform the rape trial in *To Kill A Mockingbird*. In a grade six math lesson plan on evaluating expressions with unknown values, students evidence their understanding by answering questions in both numeric and narrative form as well as design their own word problems. However, a grade eight math lesson plan as well as a grade six math lesson plan show no purposeful integration of the instructional shifts. Whereas a grade eight ELA lesson plan indicates two Common Core standards that call for the use of text-based evidence however the activities included in that lesson plan do not include activities in which students would accomplish this.

- Whereas curriculum maps and pacing calendars show no evidence of planning for differentiation of instruction, lesson plans reveal uneven preparation for students with disabilities and English Language Learners (ELLs). The lesson plan for a grade eight math class includes a variety of words that can describe student seating arrangements. The words *flexible, heterogeneous*, and *pairs* are circled. A grade six math lesson plan indicates that students would be issued questions leveled to their groups’ need. Additionally, the lesson plan states that students would receive leveled materials, all covering the same topic. This same plan also includes lists of the three student groups along with the data used to determine student placement. Additionally, a grade seven English Language Arts (ELA) lesson plan details different sets of pages from a common text that differentiated student groups would be assigned to read.

- A grade eight ELA lesson plan includes a prepopulated section in which a variety of differentiation strategies are listed as well another section that includes a checklist that would indicate the specific plan for differentiation, including choices such as readiness level and learning style. However, none of the items were checked nor any of the specific strategies highlighted or underlined. The narrative Description of Differentiation Plan lacks clarity insofar as it states, “I plan to differentiate for student learning style by having students work in heterogeneous groups that will allow students to work together to annotate the text.” The plan also discusses how all students with disabilities will be allowed extra time, regardless of their documented need for extra time and lists the provision of a Spanish translation of the power point presentation as a tool for learning-style differentiation. A grade six social studies lesson plan makes no mention of student groupings, differentiation strategies or scaffolds that would be provided for any students. Only two of the nine lesson plans connected to the class visits conducted during this school visit included differentiation strategies designed for ELLs.
Findings
Across classrooms, multiple entry points into the curricula were inconsistently provided to students. Work products and discussions inconsistently reflected high levels of student participation.

Impact
Teaching strategies were mostly geared toward a single learning style with few avenues for students of multiple learning styles to join in the lesson. Additionally, students have limited opportunities to engage in appropriately challenging tasks, or demonstrate higher-order thinking skills in discussions.

Supporting Evidence

- Translated readings were available for students in a grade eight ELA class where groups that contained ELLs also had students who could serve as translators. In a grade six science class, students were seated in leveled groups and benefited from a variety of scaffolds, including stations based on video and audio presentations about weather patterns as well as translated materials for ELLs. However, in all other classes students were assigned to complete identical tasks without the provision of multiple entry points, differentiation for different learners, or translations for ELLs.

- In a grade six science class, students worked cooperatively at stations as they determined the impact that different severe weather conditions can have on daily life. In a grade seven ELA class, students worked within their groups to create a claim as to whether or not the main character of the novel Lyddie was a hero. Students in groups were assigned to roles, including writer, facilitator and researcher. In an English as a New Language (ENL) class, students were asked to conduct a student-to-student conversation in which they were to discuss a job that is not currently done by a machine and to evaluate the benefits of having a robot conduct that work. However, students were not given time to conduct those conversations as they were immediately engaged in a teacher-facilitated discussion regarding the assigned question.

- Across classrooms, there were multiple missed opportunities for students to engage in student-to-student discussions or cooperative learning within their assigned groups. In a grade seven ELA class, the teacher informed students what had occurred in the class text up until the current lesson instead of asking students to turn and talk with their partners about that same topic. In a grade eight math class, the teacher asked one student to write an algebraic expression on the board, instead of asking students to write that algebraic expression individually and then share this work with peers for reflection or assessment. During a social studies lesson, the teacher asked if students could identify the characteristics of any given religion. This teacher subsequently called upon three individual students to share their responses instead of engaging all students in discussion around that question within pairs or larger groups.
Additional Finding

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Quality Indicator:</th>
<th>3.4 High Expectations</th>
<th>Rating:</th>
<th>Developing</th>
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</table>

Findings

School leaders and staff are developing expectations that are connected to college and career readiness. Teacher teams are developing a culture for learning that communicates high expectations for all students.

Impact

A handbook for students and families contains expectations connected to grade promotion and middle school graduation. Teacher teams and staff are developing supports that will give a level of clarity for students to be prepared for the next level.

Supporting Evidence

- A handbook for students and parents shares expectations relating to day-to-day and academic responsibilities. Handbook sections are devoted to topics such as attendance, lateness, the code of conduct and expectations of behavior in various school settings, as well as academic progress. Topics connected to a path to college and career include a grading policy, information on the school-wide grading policy, grade-level promotion, retention, graduation requirements, and high school articulation.

- Parents praised the faculty for providing a Zumba class. While some workshops have been offered to parents, workshops designed to fully inform them of the Common Core Learning Standards, and how they impact their children are being planned and have not yet taken place.

- Whereas the school provides access to an online grading system for teachers, families, and students, students reported that some teachers do not utilize it, including teachers of core academic subjects. Additionally, whereas the school has established a structure of cohorts in which students are to receive guidance and supports that would help them achieve success, five out of ten students were not able to identify the cohort to which they belonged or speak to beneficial information learned from this structure.
Findings

School leaders support teachers’ development with feedback and next steps from infrequent cycles of classroom observation. Feedback to teachers captures strengths, challenges, and next steps.

Impact

Classroom observation cycles are infrequent. Feedback from school leaders documented in observation reports is not yet fully aligned with the Danielson *Framework for Teaching*.

Supporting Evidence

- School leaders have organized classroom observations so that the principal observes all teachers new to the profession as well as those on a Teacher Improvement Plan (TIP). All other teachers are divided into one of two content-area clusters, both of which are assigned to one of two assistant principals. However, analysis of the seventeen provided observation reports evidence that classroom observation cycles are infrequent. Four teachers’ most recent classroom observations occurred in October, two in November, and four in December. Among that group is a teacher who was on a TIP during the 2015-2016 school year. Though this teacher is no longer on a TIP, a continued level of targeted growth through direct classroom observations is not supporting further development.

- In an ELA teacher’s observation report, the teacher was rated *Developing* for using assessment in instruction. The school leader supported this teacher with feedback advocating for the use of student peer- and self-assessment to compliment the use of a model essay provided during the lesson. In a science teacher’s observation report, the teacher was rated *Developing* in engaging students in learning. This teacher benefited from feedback that provided actionable next steps such as incorporating roles for students within group assignments. A science teacher received feedback aligned to a *Developing* rating in using questioning and discussion techniques that advocate for the use of Webb’s Depth of Knowledge (DOK) tool for writing high level questions, and the use of sentence starters in support of students’ increased participation in class discussions.

- Feedback to teachers is inconsistently aligned to the Danielson *Framework for Teaching* and does not consistently include actionable feedback. An observation noted, “Student engagement with the content was largely passive.” However, the feedback stated that the teacher should engage students in argument, without assisting the teacher with the inclusion of any actionable next steps or the identification of resources to which the teacher could seek guidance. In another observation report, the teacher was rated *Developing* in assessment but received feedback on how to give feedback that includes not only praise, but also encouragement. There is no inclusion on next steps this teacher should take in order to improve in-class assessment strategies. Another observation report evidences ratings of *Developing* in designing coherent instruction, using questioning and discussion techniques, and engaging students in learning. However, feedback to this teacher referred him to read the IS 229 Instructional Planning Guide. Aside from mentioning the section titles of that guide, there are no actionable next steps offered to the teacher or reference to specific support personnel or resources to which the teacher should turn for further guidance or clarification.