Quality Review Report

2016-2017

P.S. 246 Poe Center
Elementary 10X246
2641 Grand Concourse
Bronx
NY 10468

Principal: Beverly Pascal Miller

Dates of Review:
May 30, 2017 - May 31, 2017

Lead Reviewer: Joan Prince
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. 246 Poe Center 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

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Instructional Core</th>
<th>Area</th>
<th>Rating</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>To what extent does the school...</strong></td>
<td></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>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>Area of Focus</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</td>
<td>Maintain a culture of mutual trust and positive attitudes that supports the academic and personal growth of students and adults</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3.4</td>
<td>Establish a culture for learning that communicates high expectations to staff, students and families, and provide supports to achieve those expectations</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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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1.3</td>
<td>Make strategic organizational decisions to support the school’s instructional goals and meet student learning needs, as evidenced by meaningful student work products</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3.1</td>
<td>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>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4.1</td>
<td>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>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4.2</td>
<td>Engage in structured professional collaborations on teams using an inquiry approach that promotes shared leadership and focuses on improved student learning</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5.1</td>
<td>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>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Area of Celebration

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

Findings

School leaders consistently communicate high expectations for professionalism and instruction to the entire staff aligned with the Danielson Framework for Teaching. School leaders and staff effectively communicate expectations connected to a path to college and career readiness.

Impact

A culture of mutual accountability for high expectations is in place, and parent partnerships successfully help support student progress toward those expectations.

Supporting Evidence

- School leaders and faculty define high expectations as challenging children to think at a high level and to expose students to grade-level text, using Webb’s Depth of Knowledge questioning to elevate student understanding. The entire school community has a mutual understanding of what is necessary for students to meet the high expectations across the entire school. Participation of parents in the school provides actions designed to advance educational goals. There is open visitation of families into the classrooms, and rubrics aligned to setting goals for moving students toward the next level is embedded into the school structure. Students stated that they self-assess to measure their progress and restate next-level goals as it relates to the high expectations of the school. Staff receives training in all competencies of the Danielson Framework for Teaching, and through consistent written and verbal communication, staff is well aware of the instructional and professional expectations established by the school. Consequently, a culture exists across the school where all constituents are mutually accountable to improve student learning outcomes.

- The principal and teacher leaders use the Danielson Framework for Teaching to provide meaningful feedback to teachers based upon formal and informal visits and observations as evidenced by Advance documents reviewed. Also, teachers support each other through intervisitations and ongoing discussions during team work. There are focused trainings on the domains at teacher team meetings and schoolwide professional development, some of which are teacher-led. A review of teacher team documents showed a lens on using rigorous questioning and discussion with tiered activities. Curriculum resources and grade-specific portfolios reflect elements of the Danielson Framework for Teaching as well.

- A strong relationship exists between families and the school, starting from when new students enter and continuing through the end of the school year. The faculty and staff communicate via email and Google Docs, and parents and family members use PupilPath for communication with teachers, and there is a weekly newsletter from the administration to staff and parents. Parents stated that there is an open door policy throughout the school focusing on students having accountability for their behaviors and taking part of differing opportunities leading to a path for career and or career readiness. School leaders effectively communicate the expectations for college and career readiness by providing workshops for parents, giving them relevant information. Parent workshops have included curriculum nights, monthly Science, Technology, Engineering, and Math (STEM) nights, and family fun activities such as the Science Fair where fifth graders presented to lower-grade students.
Findings

Pedagogy is aligned to the curricula and reflects a coherent set of beliefs about student learning that is informed by the Danielson *Framework for Teaching* and the instructional shifts. Teaching strategies are beginning to provide multiple entry points into the curricula.

Impact

The alignment of pedagogy to curricula and the use of scaffolding and effective questioning strategies, along with scaffolding and multiple entry points, enable some but not all learners to be engaged in appropriately challenging tasks. There are missed opportunities for student work products and discussions to reflect high levels of thinking and participation.

Supporting Evidence

- Pedagogy is aligned to the curricula and informed by the Danielson *Framework for Teaching* and the instructional shifts. Academic vocabulary has been embedded into the lesson planning for all students, not just for English Language Learners (ELLs) or struggling learners. In a grade four English Language Arts (ELA) class that includes both general education students and ELLs, the teacher had students participating in their historical fiction clubs. There were charts on every desk reminding students about interpreting characters. Students were reminded that “reading involves thinking” by the teacher. Students were aware that they will be sharing out at the end of the lesson and writing checklists were on desks. The teacher directed all questions in relation to what was important to remember and how to make connections. Students in groups were looking in the book for answers. Language prompts were supplied if needed, however, there was no group talk and no questions posed by students. The teacher had good wait time and there was organized transition around the room. However, the class lacked a clear aim and the teacher gave solutions instead of fostering connections. In many classes visited, teachers did not engage students and during the student meeting, most students stated that the work was easy for them.

- Teaching strategies in classrooms are beginning to provide scaffolding and multiple entry points into the curricula. Across classrooms, students justified responses by citing textual evidence, had peer interactions, and focused on backing up their statements. Teachers made connections to the real world by explicitly connecting concepts to everyday experiences and encouraging inquiry. Large group settings were limited. Extensions for higher performing students were not always in place. While many teachers encouraged students to frame their own questions and respond to other students, there were instances of teachers leading the lesson and answering student questions instead of reframing and redirecting the questions to other students for discussion. Academic tasks vary in opportunities for student choice and extensions for higher performing students are limited.

- Teachers were often conferring with groups. In a grade one ELA class, students were sharing ideas for writing stories about their families. Students were encouraged to collaborate with one another, in small groups or pair-share discussions. At the student meeting, students expressed that they are comfortable talking with each other and discussing their thoughts on a subject, as well as participating in writing peer assessments. An essential question is posed for all lessons, and the school has given considerable attention and focus to questioning based on Webb’s *Depth of Knowledge* rubric in order to promote higher-order thinking skills in student work. However, student grouping is varied across classrooms and is not always data-driven, thereby limiting its effectiveness in providing support to the needs of targeted students, especially students with disabilities. As a result, instructional practices do not sufficiently provide multiple entry points that actively engage all learners.
### Additional Finding

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

The school has implemented curricula and tasks within and across grades aligned to the Common Core Learning Standards (CCLS) and the Danielson Framework for Teaching that support college and career readiness for all learners across the grades and content areas.

**Impact**

Coherent alignment, standards for practice, instructional shifts, assessments, and learning plans and activities have resulted in a well-structured instructional framework so that all learners can demonstrate their thinking.

**Supporting Evidence**

- Curriculum maps provide evidence that the school develops rigorous academic tasks through the adoption of instructional materials from Fountas and Pinnell and Fundations in lower grades, and GO Math! for math. There are math specialists for kindergarten through grade two, and grades three through five that look to improve math discussions through a focus on reading comprehension, thinking aloud and visualizations. As a result of instructional teams’ itemized analysis from formative and summative assessment results, it was determined that all teachers needed to incorporate more rigorous questioning into their lessons. The writing for kindergarten students revealed the need for more foundational skills. The decision was made to use Fundations and Leveled Literacy by Fountas and Pinnell to incorporate foundational skills in kindergarten through grade two. Additionally, the instructional cabinet uses selected materials as a tool to identify gaps in the school’s ELA and math curricula so that teachers can purposefully plan rigorous lessons aligning to the school’s curriculum. This has resulted in students developing higher-order thinking skills and acceleration in their progress towards attaining learning targets. Eighty percent of students in kindergarten through grade five have demonstrated gains in reading achievement as measured by Teachers College reading assessments.

- Science lesson plans show the use of visual aids, assorted graphic organizers, and leveled texts. Rigorous academic tasks that include the use of Webb’s Depth of Knowledge essential questions to create more rigor in discussions was found across the writing skills curricula. The math unit plans show lessons geared to having students engaged in mathematical practice in using word problems, and emphasizes critical areas, multi-step problem solving, and depth of understanding through interactive lessons, research-based instructional approaches, and best practices that use differentiated instructional resources to ensure success for all students.

- Teachers College Reading and Writing Project and story units from EngageNY refine the units for the upper grades. Reading and writing and content area units of study integrate the Common Core Learning Standards and the instructional shifts across content areas. Planned strategies include tiered academic vocabulary, fluency, multi-step problem solving, argumentative writing and text-based responses. Unit plans in all content areas illustrated multiple designs of academic tasks with numerous scaffolds and entry points for all learners and extensions for the advanced learners. There exists a unified curriculum and teacher-developed common assessments exist. Teachers are being supported through professional development and given learning opportunities to refine their teaching practices to address the instructional shifts and have more rigorous tasks with higher-order discussions taking place.
Findings
Across classrooms teachers use or create assessment, rubrics, and grading policies that are aligned with the school’s curricula. The school uses common assessments to determine students’ progress toward goals and to check for understanding.

Impact
Assessment practices provide students and teachers with actionable feedback regarding progress and achievement. Curricula and lesson planning are adjusted based on data analysis to meet student learning needs.

Supporting Evidence

- All teachers use common assessments aligned to the Common Core Learning Standards and the Danielson Framework for Teaching and adjust as needed. This is clear in the younger grades as evidenced by the baseline assessment data charts used for information. There is on-demand writing, reading surveys, Teachers College Running Records, as well as phonics assessments by Fountas and Pinnell and Words Their Way by Donald Bear.

- Leveled texts and a variety of graphic organizers that include t-charts, and charts that identify what students know, want to know and later what they’ve learned, as well as anchor charts enable students to self-assess. Conferencing notes are used to assess student progress toward unit and grade-level goals. Students use turn and talk and think-pair-share as means of assessing each other’s thinking. Writing on demand, post on demand and published pieces are graded against a school-wide rubric. A review of student work products at the student meeting revealed actionable feedback for students to move to the next steps in their learning goals.

- There is ongoing professional development that is planned in response to trends and current data along with teachers’ instructional capacity needs. Formative, periodic and summative assessments are used to plan and refine lessons to meet the needs of all students and assist in planning professional development learning opportunities to support this work. These common assessments are analyzed to show student growth along the continuum of the standards. Exit slips have been implemented across the school and have assisted teachers in identifying areas to re-teach. For example, an item-skills analysis of English Language Arts assessment results indicated learning gaps in the comprehension of informational texts and identifying evidence to support claims. Adjustments to curricula and lesson planning included generating focused teaching points, increasing informational texts and engaging students in reading and discussions using text-based evidence across subjects.
Additional Finding

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

**Findings**

Thoughtful rubric-aligned observation and feedback systems support professional growth, including those new to the system. The principal is proactive in supporting teachers, providing feedback, as well as making informed and effective organizational decisions to support improvements in pedagogy.

**Impact**

Rubric-aligned observations and feedback systems support professional growth and have elevated pedagogy and teacher reflection of their practice throughout the school.

**Supporting Evidence**

- The school uses *Advance* to track observations on a regular cycle and monitor trends in teaching practices. The principal tracks teacher strengths and areas for improvement and looks at student work products and rubrics to monitor the effectiveness of observation feedback to student learning outcomes. Consequently, the principal is able to make precise teacher performance evaluations, provide specific feedback that informs the quality of each teacher’s work and suggest highly tailored next steps to help them improve professionally. An example of this was seen in an observation report where the principal provided feedback that stressed the importance of students understanding the why behind the work. Professional development around Danielson’s domains has supported teachers’ instructional practice and has been planned collectively with administration and staff. The school administration has an understanding and alignment of instructional practice to the Domains of the Danielson *Framework for Teaching*. Administration is providing feedback to teachers around instructional practice next steps. Teacher teams have created vertical alignment of skills and concepts relating to the instructional focus. Positive impact has been shown through enhanced organizational practices such as optimized staff time for grade level teachers to meet weekly to make adjustments to instruction, and the school continues to work toward narrowing the gap between under- and well-performing teachers’

- All teachers have met individually with the principal to receive feedback with next steps both verbally and in writing. A new teacher is supported by a teacher mentor with planning, use of materials and demonstrations of lessons. Some teachers in need are supported by experienced teachers on the grade at least once a week. There are model lessons to encourage differentiation and multiple entry points and to provide individuals planning sessions with other staff member when needed. The principal’s open door policy fosters trust and enables teachers to freely discuss lessons that worked well and where they are having continuing struggles.

- Teachers are required to maintain a log of support that is reviewed by their mentor or an administrator. There is ongoing communication between teachers, mentors, administrators and new teachers attend off-site professional development as needed. Teacher leaders and administrators carry out walkthroughs where they look for evidence of skills and strategies that have been taught during prior professional development sessions. All teacher observations look for evidence of Danielson’s *Framework for Teaching* and then provide subsequent feedback. Consequently, the principal is able to make precise teacher performance evaluations and provide specific feedback that informs the quality of the teachers’ work and suggest highly tailored next steps for teachers to improve professionally.
Additional Finding

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

Findings

The majority of teachers are engaged in structured, inquiry-based professional collaborations that promote the achievement of school goals. Leadership structures provide a means for teachers to have input on key decisions about curricula and teaching practices.

Impact

The work of teacher teams has strengthened the instructional capacity of teachers. Shared leadership structures build capacity that positively affect student learning across the school.

Supporting Evidence

- Teacher teams use the *Teachers College Reading and Writing* assessment to ensure consistency in inquiry work across subjects and grades. Teams have developed unit plans in reading, writing and math based on the Common Core and the Danielson *Framework for Teaching* strategies. Teams have infused their own work into *GO Math!* and plan lessons and identify strategies to meet the needs of their students. Teachers stated that they are beginning to differentiate lessons and tasks based on skill level, and reflect on best practices. The principal, along with administrative staff and teacher leaders, have created a learning community focused on student outcomes with a clear vision to accelerate learning. Teachers at the teacher teams meetings explained how they are starting to use essential questioning, key ideas and details to craft and structure lesson planning with a focus on facilitating meaningful discussions with active participation in their classrooms.

- There is distributive leadership throughout the school where teachers assist in instructional and curricular decisions that affect student learning. Administrators and teachers work collaboratively on making curricular decisions to promote student progress and impact the quality of the instructional core across classrooms. As evident in the third grade teacher team meeting focusing on English Language Arts, there were team roles, looking at student work protocols, clarifying strategies and next steps. Data was revisited, patterns of weakness and gaps were addressed and new strategies were discussed in relation to student achievement.

- Cross grade teams look at patterns and trends and compare student notes on what is challenging students and why they need to succeed. Teachers stated that they now have more interest in working across grades to better meet the needs of students. Teacher teams facilitate intervisitations in order to gain insight into their own strengths and challenges. Teachers share information in a non-evaluative manner and schedule and track visits and feedback. There are grade level teacher leaders that select and provide professional development as needed based on classroom visits and assessing the learning environment.