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. 081 Thaddeus Stevens 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>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>To what extent does the school...</strong></td>
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<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>
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<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>Developing</td>
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</tbody>
</table>
### School Culture

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

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

### Systems for Improvement

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

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<thead>
<tr>
<th>Area</th>
<th>Rating</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1.3 Make strategic organizational decisions to support the school’s instructional goals and meet student learning needs, as evidenced by meaningful student work products</td>
<td>Additional Finding</td>
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<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>
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<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>
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<tr>
<td>5.1 Evaluate the quality of school-level decisions, making adjustments as needed to increase the coherence of policies and practices across the school, with particular attention to the CCLS</td>
<td>Additional Finding</td>
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</tbody>
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Area of Celebration

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

Findings

School leaders consistently convey high expectations to staff through ongoing feedback and professional learning aligned to the Danielson Framework for Teaching. The school provides ongoing information to families regarding student progress toward college and career readiness.

Impact

Ongoing communication and support by school leaders around classroom visits support teachers’ understanding and awareness of the expectations for teaching and learning. Communication from school leaders and teachers through monthly newsletters and other strategies provide frequent opportunities for families to understand student progress towards meeting standards.

Supporting Evidence

- Review of the faculty handbook reveals the sharing of high expectations around instructional design, grading policies, as well as professional responsibilities. Examples of items covered in this resource include lesson plan components and best practices aligned to the Danielson Framework for Teaching, assessment practices, and a classroom environment checklist. The school leader also shares a weekly newsletter of upcoming events, due dates, and expectations for the classroom. For example, in one weekly newsletter, teachers were reminded to include specific differentiation strategies in their lesson plans. Teachers reported that weekly newsletter supports their understanding of expectations at the school.

- School leaders and staff share academic expectations connected to college and career readiness through monthly newsletters that include student learning goals for the month, expectations for students’ behavior, availability of staff for parent meetings on Tuesdays, and the dress code. In addition, parents have access to an online program that provides them with information regarding homework completion and classroom behaviors. Parents can also visit classrooms every Thursday morning and then meet with school leaders. One parent shared that a chunking strategy to help students comprehend text was presented in a classroom visit on a Thursday. She stated that she used the strategy at home with her child, as well. One parent reported, and all present agreed, that the staff consistently communicates with them. Taken together, the different communication strategies provide families with feedback that helps them understand student progress.

- School leaders support staff in understanding expectations aligned to the Danielson Framework for Teaching through weekly professional learning sessions and unofficial written feedback. For example, teachers received feedback on their lesson plans, such as refining learning targets to be more concise, using exit slips to inform the next lesson, and providing differentiation. Teachers reported implementing feedback provided on their lesson plans thus strengthening teachers’ planning practices. In addition, the written feedback includes components of a highly effective lesson plan thus supporting high expectations for teachers.
**Area of Focus**

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

School leaders and faculty are in the process of aligning curricula to the Common Core Learning Standards; however, the instructional shifts are not yet embedded in a coherent manner. Rigorous habits and higher-order skills are inconsistently emphasized across curricula for students of all levels, including English Language Learners (ELLs) and students with disabilities.

**Impact**

Curricula does not yet consistently promote college and career readiness for all students. Students are not yet consistently challenged to demonstrate their thinking across the curricula.

**Supporting Evidence**

- Across the school, some classes are utilizing a Common Core-aligned curriculum in which the instructional shifts are embedded. The English, math, science, and social studies curricular documents show evidence that the alignment with the Common Core and content standards has begun as per the indication of which standard(s) are covered next to some unit themes and/or chapters. However, these documents do not evidence how the instructional shifts have been purposefully integrated into the instructional strategies to be utilized in the teaching of these units. A grade five English curricular document lists the title and genre of text that will be used throughout the year, thus showing a balance between fiction and nonfiction. However, grade three and grade four math curriculum maps included dates and the name of the lesson to be taught, such as model place value relationships. Therefore, the instructional shifts are evident in some curricula, however the shifts are not integrated purposefully.

- Review of curriculum maps and pacing calendars for kindergarten through grade five provide evidence of skills and strategies to be taught such as cause and effect, compare and contrast, and draw conclusions to ensure that rigorous content is emphasized. However, not all curricula included this level of detail. A review of kindergarten and grade-three science units revealed the unit overview, major understandings, and standards taught. Additionally, there is no mention of the tools and/or strategies to be used in ensuring that rigorous content is emphasized for ELLs or students with disabilities. Therefore, rigorous habits are inconsistently emphasized across grades and content areas.

- Review of academic tasks revealed an inconsistent emphasis on rigorous habits and higher-order skills for all learners. A grade four task required students to use evidence from the text to compare the narrator to his grandfather by identifying similarities and differences between the two. However, this level of rigor was not evident in other tasks. A review of grade five tasks revealed that students are required to read a paragraph and answer comprehension questions, pick two different animals that live in the zoo and describe how they are alike and different, and write a paragraph about an imaginary island. Additional tasks included illustrating and describing landforms in grade two, explaining why maps are useful in grade four, and reading a paragraph and completing a fill-in-the-blank worksheet in grade three.
Additional Finding

### Quality Indicator

<table>
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<tr>
<th>1.2 Pedagogy</th>
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### Rating:

**Developing**

### 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, leading to uneven engagement in challenging tasks and resulting in a lack of meaningful work products.

### Supporting Evidence

- During a grade three math lesson, students created models to solve partitive division problems. Some students utilized counters, while others drew their model of the division problem. One student was provided with the work in her native language of Spanish. Additionally, during a grade four Integrated Co-Teaching (ICT) math class, students were grouped homogenously into two groups. Each group had a teacher working with them to solve division word problems. In one group, the students listed multiples as a strategy to solve the problem, while the other group created a tape model to solve the problem. All students, including students with disabilities, were engaged in the task. However, across classrooms, there were missed opportunities to provide multiple entry points into the lesson. In a kindergarten math lesson, all students were assigned the same page to complete. When students completed the assigned page, they received an additional task. During a grade two science lesson, all students were completing the same task of determining which object, a marble, cotton ball or foam ball, would roll the farthest down a ramp. Students wrote their predictions and reasons in their notebooks. Several students did not have completed predictions in their notebooks by the end of the class. Lack multiple entry points and scaffolds limits students’ access to challenging tasks.

- Opportunities for students to engage in high levels of thinking and discussion were limited. In a kindergarten math class, students stood a circle and watched while one student picked a card and then counted forward to ten. Two additional students completed this activity before being directed to their seats. Students were then asked why it was important to know how to count forward from any number. A student responded because we want to write our numbers in words. In a grade two social studies class, students generated questions they had about an image of a Hindu god. Students were then instructed to place their questions on a piece of chart paper labeled parking lot. They did not share their questions with each other or engage in a discussion. Thus, there were uneven levels of student thinking and missed opportunities for student discussion.

- In a grade five reading lesson, students discussed what it means to do the right thing. One student stated doing the right thing is the opposite of the wrong thing. In response, the teacher revised the question and asked students how a person knows what the right thing is. One student stated that if they are doing the right thing, then pre-kindergarten students can follow their behavior. The teacher provided the answer and then reviewed the word cocoon and read the story aloud to the class. While students had the opportunity to discuss, the connection between the discussion prompts and reading was not clear, leading to a lack of meaningful work products.
Findings

Across classrooms, teachers use or create rubrics that are loosely aligned with the school's curricula. Teachers' assessment practices inconsistently reflect the use of ongoing checks for understanding, such as thumbs up or thumbs down or questioning.

Impact

Feedback to students regarding student achievement is inconsistent and limited. Inconsistent checks prevent teachers from making effective adjustments to content and instruction to meet student needs.

Supporting Evidence

- Checks for understanding were inconsistently utilized during the classes observed over this two-day visit. In some classes, teachers circulated throughout the room to check-in with students during the lesson, however, this practice did not yield adjustments. In a grade-two social studies class, the teacher asked students to indicate their understanding of a Hindu god by showing a thumbs-up or thumbs-down. Additionally, during a kindergarten math lesson, after several students modeled the skill of counting forward from any number other than one, all students were instructed to complete the same math workbook page on that skill. Additionally, a student who demonstrated a more advanced skill was also instructed to complete the same workbook page. During a reading lesson, the teacher asked what the word exaggerate means. A student stated that is means something is not real. The teacher accepted the answer and moved on to the next topic. Taken together, the inconsistent or ineffective use of checks for understanding led to missed opportunities to engage students in appropriately challenging tasks.

- Although some rubrics are aligned to the curricula, it does not result in consistent, actionable feedback to students. Written feedback to students advised students to rephrase their ideas to make the meaning more clear, work on writing a good introduction, and to try to read more closely and add more details. Additional teacher feedback included the number four written on the work and a stamp that said “great job” or “exemplary.” Therefore, feedback is limited and does not consistently provide feedback regarding student achievement.

- Students quickly came to consensus that feedback should help them understand what they did incorrectly. One student shared that he received feedback on a narrative writing piece to use more sensory details. However, all six of the students shared work that included limited or no feedback. Two students reported that their feedback on a math task was to work on handwriting. Another student reported that his feedback on a math task was to highlight the answers. One student said, “I didn’t get any feedback. It was just a compliment.” Therefore, students are provided with limited feedback that does not lead to improved student performance on future tasks.
**Additional Finding**

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<th>Quality Indicator:</th>
<th>4.1 Teacher Support and Supervision</th>
<th>Rating:</th>
<th>Proficient</th>
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**Findings**

Written feedback captures teachers' strengths, challenges, and next steps using the Danielson Framework for Teaching. There is an effective system in place that uses teacher observation data in the design and facilitation of professional development.

**Impact**

Classroom visits result in written feedback that make clear the expectations for teacher practice and there are supports available, such as coaches, to help teachers meet them. Informed decisions support professional growth across the school.

**Supporting Evidence**

- Observation reports contain feedback that captures teachers' strengths and weaknesses and is accompanied by next steps teachers should take to improve their practice. For example, in one report the teacher is advised to use a timer to assist in pacing the lesson to allow for more student work time and to use the question formation technique that was presented during a professional learning session. The report indicates that the literacy coach will also model the questioning technique as an additional support. Examples of feedback from other reports include to utilize a problem-solving strategy, plan activities that match the readiness of student groups and to ask more higher-order questions to students to encourage student-student discussion.

- Review of observation reports for the same teacher revealed teacher growth as a result of previous feedback. In an observation report, a teacher was advised to differentiate instruction for groups of students. The report indicates that a coach would meet with the teacher to develop a plan for instruction. In the following observation report, the teacher was commended for the level of engagement the students demonstrated while practicing strategies taught in the mini-lesson. Taken together, feedback and support provided to teachers promote teacher development.

- School leaders use observation report data in determining whole-faculty professional development cycles. The professional learning schedule reveals a purposeful design in supporting teachers' evidenced need for developing questions and learning outcomes. Sessions around developing effective questions were planned after the first round of observations revealed this as a deficiency across the school. Additionally, after unofficial observations and walkthroughs in the month of September revealed a need for deeper understanding on developing learning outcomes, a series of professional learning was planned for October. School leaders include feedback connected to professional learning in observation reports. One observation report suggested the teacher try a questioning technique that was presented in professional learning. The teacher reported that she tried the questioning strategy and continues to use it. As a result, professional learning is effective and driven by the needs of the teachers and leads to professional growth for teachers.
**Additional Finding**

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<tr>
<th>Quality Indicator:</th>
<th>4.2 Teacher Teams and Leadership Development</th>
<th>Rating:</th>
<th>Developing</th>
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**Findings**

Teacher teams are beginning the work of analyzing assessment data and student work for students they share or whom they are focused. Distributive leadership structures are developing.

**Impact**

The work of teacher teams does not consistently result in improved progress for groups of students. School leaders support leadership capacity building through various teacher responsibilities and include teachers in key decisions.

**Supporting Evidence**

- The majority of teachers are engaged in weekly, structured teams that analyze assessment data and student work in the course of their grade team meetings. However, the majority of these teams do not share students or identify a target group of students based on analysis of assessment data or student work. Grade three and grade four are departmentalized thus allowing teachers to analyze student work for shared students. Minutes from a grade four team meeting revealed an analysis from a beginning of the year assessment. It was noted that students were not restating questions, reading with understanding, or not marking up the question with the strategy used. The list of next steps included practice annotating text and word problems, activating schema, preparing grammar and math skill problems. The minutes included that team members would research annotation strategies and model different strategies for students. While these structures support goals for some students, they are not yet consistently focused on goals for groups of students.

- A grade three teacher team was observed reviewing three student narrative writing samples. The team used a protocol and identified strengths and next steps in the student writing. It was noted that one student used transitional words but did not use enough descriptive words. Teachers shared suggestions to improve students writing such as have students draw a picture and then write a story, highlight descriptive words, and create an anchor chart. While teachers on this team share groups of students, the impact of this work has yet to result in progress for groups of students.

- There are currently minimal structures in place that build teacher leadership capacity. The special education department is led by the IEP teacher who attends trainings and facilitates school-level meetings. However, this level of leadership development and support was not evident for additional teachers. While teachers have the opportunity to turnkey professional development workshops they attend to their department or grade team this structure is developing and has yet to lead to decisions that impact student learning. School leaders also select teachers to be principal for a day twice a year to allow teachers to experience school-level leadership. Additionally, teachers rotate who facilitates grade team meetings to allow everyone the opportunity to lead a meeting. While this structure allows multiple teachers to experience facilitating a meeting, because it is done on a rotation, it is not yet connected to teacher voice in key decisions. Therefore, distributive leadership structures support teacher leadership and are beginning to provide teachers with a voice in decisions that impact student learning.