Quality Review Report

2017-2018

P.S. 119 Amersfort
Elementary 22K119
3829 Avenue K
Brooklyn
NY 11210

Principal: Lisa Fernandez

Dates of Review:
October 24, 2017 - October 25, 2017

Lead Reviewer: Jacqueline King-Robinson
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. 119 Amersfort 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><strong>To what extent does the school...</strong></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>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>Developing</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>Proficient</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>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>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>
### Findings

School staff uses the *PeaceBuilders* curriculum across grades and content areas to inform its approach to social emotional learning and youth development and they receive professional development that is aligned to the curriculum. There are structures in place to coordinate attendance.

### Impact

Across the school students have developed effective academic and personal behaviors. Students work hard and support one another through their learning experiences.

### Supporting Evidence

- There is an attendance team that calls late and absent students on a daily basis. If there is a pattern of absence and lateness the parent coordinator acts as a liaison and reaches out to schedule meetings. Additionally, the school leader conducts home visits for students with long-term absence. The work of the attendance team has resulted in the school maintaining a 96 percent attendance rate. Furthermore, it was evident that students are known well by at least one adult in the building, and in both student meetings they identified adults that know them well including the principal. Additionally, school staff conducts orientations in September for returning families, and in May for incoming students so that families can support their children, as school staff believes that a students’ health and wellness plays a major role in their academic success. Thus students are supported in developing effective personal behaviors.

- The *PeaceBuilders* principles, praise people, give up put-downs, seek wise people, notice hurts, right wrongs, and help others, are practiced in all classrooms visited. The *PeaceBuilders* program is supported by literature aligned to a monthly schoolwide theme. Students read books and analyze how characters exemplify traits that are associated with the school’s theme or how the traits developed over time. In classes students were observed persevering in solving problems, trying alternative solution paths, and collaborating with their peers to solve problems. When students display behaviors that are not supportive of the learning environment, they are asked, “What would a peacebuilder do?” After students have a moment to reflect they identify ways to correct the undesired behavior based on their *PeaceBuilders* pledge.

- Students have positive learning experiences. They were observed supporting one another with understanding new concepts. In a fifth grade math class students were having difficulty solving a division problem. The period was coming to an end and one student stated, "If we don’t get it right today we will get it tomorrow," To further support students adopting effective behaviors, each student has a goal setting notebook that they use to establish academic goals. Each week these goals are revisited and adjusted by the student, with teacher support, based on students’ progress.

- Staff is provided with professional development sessions to reinforce the implementation of the *PeaceBuilders* curriculum, resulting in the development of a common language aligned to the *PeaceBuilders* pledge that impacts students’ academic and personal behaviors. As a result of teacher input, stemming from implementing *PeaceBuilders*, a student in a Science Technology Engineering Arts Mathematics (STEAM) class stated that if he gets something wrong he does it over again and works on his mistake. Another student stated that he learns from his mistakes and tries and tries again. Also, a yoga practitioner provides the staff with professional development and there is a mental health team that provides workshops for staff, all with the goal to promote student learning experiences and the adoption of effective academic and personal behaviors.
Area of Focus

Quality Indicator: 1.1 Curriculum
Rating: Developing

Findings
School leaders and faculty are in the process of aligning curricula to Common Core Learning Standards and integrating the instructional shifts. Academic tasks emphasize rigorous habits and higher-order skills inconsistently across subjects for diverse learners.

Impact
There is a lack of coherence and limited evidence of incorporation of the instructional shifts across grades and subjects. Students have limited opportunities to engage in rigorous academic tasks.

Supporting Evidence

- The STEAM lesson plan for students in grades three through five had the same expectations in that the students will create a design in each box on their record sheet using their ruler to make straight lines. Two designs can be copied from the cards, two designs can be their initials, and the rest have to be original ideas. However, the STEAM lesson plan tasks differed in the level of rigor across grade levels, not always reaching the higher levels of rigor required.

- A fifth grade math lesson plan called for students to divide a three-digit number by a one-digit number using the traditional algorithm. A fourth grade syllabus for reading and writing did not include any evidence of the instructional shifts called for in the Common Core Learning Standards.

- Higher order thinking skills were inconsistent across grade levels and subjects. When comparing two STEAM lesson plans, one asked for students to recreate a shape from a card on their geoboards, while another lesson plan asked students to create scale models of their classroom furniture using the engineering design process. A fifth grade science unit’s essential question is “Can you solve the mystery of plant life?” The goal of the lessons contained in the unit are to identify parts of a plant, what each part does, and how plants are grown. Yet, most tasks did not emphasize rigor or higher-order thinking skills specifically for English Language Learners (ELLs) and/or student with disabilities.
Findings
Across classrooms, teaching strategies inconsistently provide multiple entry points for all learners. Student work products and discussions reflect uneven levels of student thinking and participation.

Impact
Providing students with multiple entry points was inconsistent across classrooms observed. A number of students, including ELLs and students with disabilities unevenly demonstrated higher-order thinking skills in their work products.

Supporting Evidence

- In one classroom some of the students had access to manipulatives, when solving a math problem, and a few students drew the base ten blocks on their white boards. All students wrote their answers on whiteboards. After a few moments the teacher shared one student’s correct response with the class, but only six of the twenty-six students had the correct answer, and only one student was able to explain his thinking using the rods to count by tens.

- In one STEAM math class students were engaged in a discussion about the fractional relationship between the Lego blocks they were using to create a scale version of the classroom furniture. However, in a special education teaching support services classroom, (SETSS), only some of the students were provided with manipulatives and there was no student-to-student discourse. Additionally, for most students their white boards showed a lack of conceptual understanding. There was uneven engagement in the task and limited demonstration of student thinking.

- In a third grade writing lesson the teacher provided students with a sample draft of a narrative, and using a checklist pairs of students worked to identify the parts necessary for a good draft. Then students were directed to begin their first draft. In a SETSS classroom students were using a peer revision rubric to provide one another with feedback. A few students were working with the teacher to use and understand the rubric, but the students that were working independently were unsure of how to use the rubric. This led to uneven levels of participation for some students.
Findings

Across classrooms, teachers use and create assessments, rubrics, and grading policies. Teachers use checks for understanding and student self-assessment during instruction.

Impact

The effective use of check for understanding and self-assessment are not yet consistent across grades and content areas. The quality and quantity of feedback provided to students is inconsistent across grades and content areas.

Supporting Evidence

- Student work in some classrooms contained feedback, while others did not. Feedback from the STEAM project was written in the form of grows and glows: “Excellent! I love that you identified all of the problems we have with the playhouse. You created many solutions as well. Be more specific when you explain. You mention that the problem is that the playhouse is blocking the closet and that we can make something. What is the “something” you want to make to solve the problem?” On another piece of student work, the teacher used check marks for correct responses and x’s for incorrect responses. The written feedback stated, read all directions carefully. In the small group student meeting one student noted that he did not refer to the written feedback provided by his teacher. He prefers to rely on the teacher to tell him what things he needs to do to improve his work.

- There were inconsistent checks for understanding used across all classrooms visited. In one of the fifth grade math classes there were no checks for understanding, as opposed to the another fifth grade math class where there were checks for understanding; however the checks for understanding were not utilized to make an adjustment to the instruction or task. In a second grade Integrated Collaborative teaching-class, the teacher stated that she noticed from the previous day’s exit slips that the students were having trouble with long division. The lesson’s do now activity was a division problem. After students worked on the problem for a few moments, the teacher shared one student’s response with the class, yet the teacher did not check individual student whiteboards to see if there was class-wide understanding.

- In a kindergarten math class there was a good use of hands-on-head to check for understanding. Teacher recorded findings on a checklist. In a second grade STEAM lesson, the teacher asked, “Did my plans work? Hands on your head if your plan worked.” Although some students did not place their hands on their head to indicate agreement, the teacher did not adjust the lesson.
Additional Finding

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

Findings
School leaders consistently communicate high expectations to the entire staff and provide professional learning. Staff offers ongoing feedback and guidance that prepare students for middle school.

Impact
Professional development and frequent classroom observations hold teachers accountable to meeting schoolwide expectations. Teachers offer students ongoing feedback that supports them being prepared for the next level and eventually, middle school.

Supporting Evidence

- The school leader has established an expectation that staff must create a learning environment that will promote students feeling safe, be willing to work hard, and support one another. These expectations have permeated the learning environment. Teachers are held accountable to meeting the expectations through informal observations and feedback that is aligned to the Danielson Framework for Teaching. The school leader determines the frequency and intensity of the observation cycle based on measure of student learning (MOSL), the measure of teacher practice (MOTP) from the previous year, and informal observations from the current year. Feedback from informal observations includes clear next steps for teachers to implement. The professional learning overview included sessions designed to support teachers with meeting schoolwide expectations and next steps.

- School staff conducts meetings for students regarding middle school choice. The school leader attends middle school open houses and fairs with her students. The guidance counselor works closely with students and their families to identify middle schools that will be a good fit for individual students. Alumni return to the school and serve as mentors for the younger students, as they prepare to apply for middle school. Former fifth graders have a 96 percent pass rate in their sixth grade classes.

- Students shared that they receive progress reports that inform them of their performance and what they need to do in order to be prepared for the next grade. Students participate in weekly goal setting meetings, in which they set individual goals in a notebook and assess their progress towards meeting the goals. Furthermore, teachers provide feedback to students directly in their goal setting notebooks. In student interviews students agreed that the teachers feedback helped to prepare them for the next grade.
**Additional Finding**

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

During grade level and content teacher teams teachers analyze the results of periodic assessments and student work. Distributive leadership structures are in place.

**Impact**

Teachers consistently use the results of assessments to identify how students are working towards meeting goals and to adapt pedagogical skills and strategies to address the needs of individuals and groups of students. Teacher leaders exist for each content area and grade level.

**Supporting Evidence**

- Teacher teams analyze assessment data and student work to determine appropriate goals for groups of students. Teachers confer with their students to measure progress towards their goals and to support them in establishing additional goals for themselves. The results of previous assessments are considered when establishing new goals. Across grade levels, teachers incorporate the goals they have for groups of students into their teaching practices and their team level discussions. The third grade team incorporated the writing process into each of the content areas based on the data from the diagnostic assessments, which showed that the incoming third grade students were lacking the skills necessary to produce a good written product. Student writing improved for most students, including ELLs and students with disabilities.

- There is an Ambassador professional development initiative provided by the school district. Ambassador teachers are identified for each content and specialty area. These ambassadors attend monthly professional development and turnkey their new learnings for their colleagues. The Ambassador initiative has led to improved instructional teacher practice.

- There are team leaders for each grade level and content area. Content area team leaders work with their teams to establish grade level foci for each of the content areas, identify strategies they want students to utilize, and analyze data to establish measurable goals for student improvement. Grade level team leaders work with their teams to organize trips and plan celebrations and events for the school. Teachers are also members of the School Leadership Team (SLT) and participate in SLT meetings. They meet with the school leaders to develop ideas for school improvement. There are dedicated times for each of the teams to meet.