Quality Review Report

2017-2018

P.S. 128 Bensonhurst
Elementary 21K128
2075 84 Street
Brooklyn
NY 11214

Principal: Jessica Drzewucki

Dates of Review:
January 25, 2018 - January 26, 2018

Lead Reviewer: Debra Tasioudis
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. 128 Bensonhurst 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>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>To what extent does the school...</strong></td>
<td><strong>Area</strong></td>
<td><strong>Rating</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>Additional Finding</td>
<td>Proficient</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>Area of Celebration</td>
<td>Proficient</td>
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<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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<tr>
<td>School Culture</td>
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<td><strong>To what extent does the school...</strong></td>
<td>Area</td>
<td>Rating</td>
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<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>Proficient</td>
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<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>
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<tr>
<th>Systems for Improvement</th>
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<tr>
<td><strong>To what extent does the school...</strong></td>
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<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>
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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>
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<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>
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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>
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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>
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## Area of Celebration

<table>
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<tr>
<th>Quality Indicator:</th>
<th>1.2 Pedagogy</th>
<th>Rating:</th>
<th>Proficient</th>
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### Findings
Across classrooms, students are purposefully grouped to allow for student-to-student discussion. Vocabulary supports and various scaffolds are employed to provide multiple entry points for all students.

### Impact
All students are engaged in challenging tasks and participate in discussions reflecting their thinking and learning.

### Supporting Evidence

- Across classrooms, students work in small groups. They consistently engage with a partner and share their thinking, or listen to the thinking of their peers. This practice serves as a scaffold to ensure that all students are able to become actively involved in the learning taking place. In an Integrated Co-Teaching (ICT) class, students were given a model problem. The teacher asked students to underline important vocabulary in the problem, discuss what the words meant, and how understanding the meanings of the words provide them with the guidance needed to arrive at a solution. Students then continued working with their partner, or in a trio to create their own subtraction word problems using key vocabulary. This collaborative problem analysis led to student-to-student discussions where students demonstrated their understanding of math vocabulary, and problem-solving techniques.

- Multiple entry points, often with a focus on vocabulary are provided through scaffolds and supports, such as anchor charts, table tents, highlighters, and math manipulatives. In an upper grade English Language Arts (ELA) class, the teacher guided students through a model paragraph that included evidence to support a claim, before students worked independently to produce paragraphs related to why their selected flavor of ice cream was the best. The teacher had anchor charts posted that provided a paragraph outline to follow, and a chart of vocabulary to be included in the students’ writing. As students engaged in discussions about the model, and their own plans for their paragraphs, several pairs of students were observed referring to the charts as they talked about important details or words to include. Similarly, in a science class students explored differentiated texts on photosynthesis, they read the text several times in their small groups and annotated the text as they read. Some groups worked together, others with the support of the teacher or related service provider, and some relied on writing charts in their folders to help them answer questions such as, “Where do plants get carbon dioxide?” Students within the groups worked with differentiated articles, some with a great deal of text, and others containing more pictures and diagrams. Students discussed their answers, and compared information they found. Discussions consistently reflected high levels of student engagement.

- In math classes, students frequently had opportunities to choose tasks. In several math classes, students either created their own math problems for extension activities, or had a choice of math games to play, allowing students to take ownership of their work. In a second grade math class, the teacher tasked the students with creating and solving a problem that they created. Student groups were provided one set of manipulatives, and one piece of chart paper to demonstrate their work. Students needed to work collaboratively resulting in high levels of student discussion. Students discussed math strategies as well as the best way to display their work as they completed their tasks.
Findings

Teachers engage in professional collaborations, with some teams being more informal than others, and their focus is loosely connected to implementing the Common Core. Teams discuss students and analyze the progress of students.

Impact

Although the work of teacher teams is beginning to change teacher practice as of yet, it does not typically result in improved pedagogy or increases in student achievement.

Supporting Evidence

- The majority of teachers participate in teacher teams. Most of them belong to grade level common planning teams that meet during common planning time. However, the departmentalized fifth grade teachers do not have a consistent common planning time, meet when they can, and share gradebooks through an online platform. Teachers on other grade level teams shared that during team meetings they often look at student work, discuss students who are falling behind, and discuss lessons that they may repeat or modify. School leaders in a separate meeting shared that this is a common practice, though teams do not follow time-bound agendas or keep records of their collaborative work. While teachers regularly engage and collaborate, there is limited evidence that these team meetings are promoting the achievement of the school’s goals and strengthening the instructional capacity of teachers.

- In a Response to Intervention (RtI) team meeting teachers and related service providers gathered to discuss the potential hold over list for the students whom they serve, and engage in outreach to families about summer school. Teachers also discussed student progress on the Measures of Student Learning (MoSL), the need to continue building student skills in using bar graphs, and how as yet the content in the MoSL has not been taught. As one service provider shared, “I know what I need to work on with the MoSL, but I am waiting for the teacher to get there and then I will teach it too.” Although team members are analyzing student data for students whom they share there was little evidence that the discussion would result in improved teacher progress, or progress toward goals for groups of students.

- In a grade level team meeting selected as a principal’s choice activity, teachers spoke about next steps based on their quick checks during instruction and discussed progress in completing reading assessments across their classes. One teacher had prioritized students who had scored a two or three on the last New York State ELA exam and might change her focus to students who scored a level one. Another teacher shared that based on some graded writing tasks some strong readers surfaced. Teachers talked about changing a focus for next year to emphasize the short part of the short story. They explained that these ideas will remain in the notes taken during the meeting, but sometimes do not become embedded into curricular units. One teacher said she reflects after lessons, and then knows how to adjust the lesson for the next year. As in the RtI meeting teachers used an agenda, and spoke in general terms regarding many aspects of student work and learning. An inquiry cycle or specific analysis of student work for a specific group of students was not in evidence.
Additional Finding

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

Teachers consistently align lessons to the Common Core, with attention to text-based answers, problem solving, and vocabulary acquisition. Teachers make purposeful decisions as they develop curricular units and lessons.

**Impact**

Planning practices promote student readiness for middle school. Lessons provide access to the content for all students, including ELLs and students with disabilities.

** Supporting Evidence**

- Most lesson plans are aligned to one standard in the Common Core. The objective for a fifth-grade science lesson plan addressed the development of a model to describe the movement of matter among plants, animals, decomposers, and the environment. This plan was directly aligned to the Next Generation Science Standards. Lesson plans demonstrate attention to the instructional shifts with a focus on text-based answers in ELA. Problem solving and vocabulary is stressed in math. In a kindergarten plan, students were asked to use evidence from pictures and the text to write about a true story. In a second-grade math plan, the learning target focused on students developing their ability to use key vocabulary to solve word problems. In some grades, teachers in different classrooms shared the same lesson plan, which included the necessary changes to the lessons to meet the needs of students within the classes thus, adding to coherence in planning and alignment to the Common Core.

- School leaders and teachers have purposefully decided to integrate two curricular programs for ELA, using grade level and supplemental texts that are above and below level to ensure that students are provided experiences using rigorous habits and an alternate focus with fiction and non-fiction reading and writing. A fourth grade ELA unit provides students with opportunities to research and explore the American Revolution and the reading of historical text. Units purposefully include attention to the Common Core Speaking and Listening standards. Students have many opportunities to discuss topics, before engaging in writing. This is evident across the content areas. In social studies, a third-grade unit on ancient China included frequent opportunities for students to have discussions. For example one plan requires students to use inference to build knowledge about inventions in ancient China. The unit, like many others reviewed, includes provisions for academic vocabulary instruction, graphic organizers and other supports for all learners, including students with disabilities and English Language Learners (ELLs). This focus on speaking and listening across the disciplines, and attention to the Common Core builds coherence and promotes college and career readiness for all students.

- Teachers make provisions to emphasize rigorous habits and higher-order skills for all learners. Many of the lessons and units include project-based work and student choice for exploration within the topic. Students have a choice of topics to research together, whether about ancient China, the American Revolution, or creating their own problems for other students to solve in math. Units and lesson plans included the use of differentiated texts and questions, sometimes at different levels to provide access to a variety of learners, other times to create choice or vary the task. In a lesson plan on photosynthesis some reading passages were text heavy, and others mainly contained labeled images. Lessons and units routinely include language objectives, in addition to content objectives, to ensure that students are practicing rigorous habits and skills, while building vocabulary across the grades and subjects.
Findings

Common assessments are used to track individual student progress toward goals. Teachers use ongoing checks for understanding including conferencing during lessons.

Impact

Teachers make inconsistent effective adjustments to instruction thus, not always meeting all students’ learning needs.

Supporting Evidence

- Teachers administer common assessments and track individual progress in reading levels across performance assessments that are given three times per year. Teachers keep track of student progress, through the Response to Intervention or reading progress tracking spreadsheets. These forms demonstrate tracking of individual student progress but are inconsistently used to adjust curricula and instruction. Some related service providers shared individualized instruction plans for some students receiving additional service outside of the classroom. At a question and answer session, teachers explained that these individualized plans are often shared with them, but the adjustments to instruction were not evident in lesson plans by classroom teachers. In the curricular documents reviewed, while units are adjusted to include language objectives, there is little evidence of adjustments made from the use of common assessments.

- Across classrooms, teachers use reading assessments to determine student reading levels and progress throughout the year. Spreadsheets indicated those students who had moved from red (below level) to green (at grade level) on these reading assessments. Teachers use the leveled reading assessments to determine reading groups and student partnerships and to assign texts to students. Additionally, students use the data to select books that are appropriate for independent reading. This level of assessment and the adjustments that follow was not seen across other subject areas.

- In classrooms, teachers often confer with students as they work, but adjustments were not consistent. In a few of the classes, teachers used checklists or conference notes to confer with students. In other classes, teachers checked for understanding, but did not record data regarding student misconceptions thus limiting their ability to note trends to be used for planning. In an ELA class, the teacher listened as students engaged in turn-and-talk adjustments based on their thinking. In a math class, the teacher conferred with small groups however review of work from several of the groups contained wrong answers. Corrections were not made resulting in their arriving at incorrect solutions on subsequent problems. In one class, the teacher conferred with student groups, and recorded their thinking on the board. A mid-lesson interruption took place, which provided the whole class the opportunity to clarify any misconceptions. This type of on-the-spot adjustment was not observed in other classes.
Additional Finding

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<th>Quality Indicator:</th>
<th>3.4 High Expectations</th>
<th>Rating:</th>
<th>Proficient</th>
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Findings

The school leader employs varied means, including the weekly, *Friday Focus* publication, to regularly communicate and reinforce professional expectations for the teachers. Students keep leadership binders to track their own progress.

Impact

School leaders provide training and hold teachers accountable through walkthroughs and ongoing conversations. Students receive ongoing and detailed feedback and guidance/advisement supports that prepare them for the next level.

Supporting Evidence

- School leaders consistently communicate high expectations for professionalism and instruction to the staff. A staff handbook provides all teachers a wide variety of expectations, including, the need to incorporate in the lesson plan various levels of questions to directly support student’s deep reflection, and comprehension of content. The handbook also addresses expectations for communicating with families, the use of assessments, seating students for collaboration, guidance for bulletin boards, and use of the school’s leadership curriculum. The school leader reinforces these expectations through her weekly publication, *The Friday Focus*. Ongoing professional learning sessions address aspects of the school’s instructional focus regarding the integration of language with content objectives and supporting inclusive environments. The school leaders conduct regular walkthroughs to hold teachers accountable, and provide on the spot, or emailed feedback to teachers about their expectations.

- Across the school, students keep leadership binders, which track their own progress in areas such as reading, writing, and attendance. In a lower-grade student’s binder there were scored writing and math assignments, a student-made bar chart recording reading progress, and student reflections on their reading and writing goals. Students at the question and answer sessions were quick to explain that reviewing their binders and conferring with their teachers about expectations and their progress helps them to be prepared for the next level. Students feel that the binders help them to set goals and to know whether their reading progress is helping them achieve those goals. Additionally, students explained that they use the binders to reflect on their growth in the seven habits of leadership, outlined in the curricula.

- The school leader decided to departmentalize the fifth grade to create a culture for learning that mirrors the rigor and complexity of middle school for students, and allows teachers to begin teaching the sixth grade curricula in fifth grade. Additionally, the fifth grade math teacher utilizes more complex math texts since the school implements the Algebra for All initiative, and student work focuses on deep understanding of math practices and algebraic expressions. Fifth grade students in the question and answer session praised the school for offering departmentalized fifth-grade classes. As a student shared, “In fifth grade, we have teachers for math, reading and writing, social studies and one more for science. Having different teachers is really helping us to get ready for middle school.”
Additional Finding

| Quality Indicator: | 4.1 Teacher Support and Supervision | Rating: | Developing |

Findings

School leaders support teachers using frequent cycles of observation, though feedback is not frequently connected to student work or data. Feedback to teachers captures strengths and challenges but does not always connect to the Danielson Framework for Teaching or help teachers to prioritize next steps.

Impact

Feedback to teachers sometimes enables teachers to meet the schoolwide expectations for professional growth and reflection.

Supporting Evidence

- School leaders support teachers with frequent cycles of observations. However, feedback to teachers is not consistently time-bound or prioritized. A review of the written feedback provided teachers included little reference to student work or data. Teachers and school leaders shared that the majority of feedback addressing classroom observations is provided through conversations between teachers and administrators. Written feedback is inconsistently provided to the teachers, limiting opportunities for teachers to revisit and reflect on recommendations and improve their professional practice.

- As a standard practice, school leaders give teachers next steps for every Danielson Framework for Teaching component that is rated lower than Highly Effective. Teachers may be provided with four or more next steps, which are often not time-bound or prioritized. In one observation report from September, the teacher was given eight next steps, including reminding students of instructional goals, guidance to pull a small group of students, provide additional materials, preplan questions, consider flexible grouping, provide students with choice, and to create a bigger picture for the lesson. As the next steps neither indicated an expected time for them to be implemented nor which steps were a priority, the effectiveness of the feedback is limited. This written feedback was typical of other written feedback in the reports reviewed.

- For teachers rated Highly Effective or Effective, evidence provided to support the rating, or next steps given did not always align to the rating descriptors in the Danielson Framework for Teaching. In one report reviewed, the teacher was rated Highly Effective in using questioning and discussion techniques. The teacher was praised by the school leader for having, “multiple opportunities [for students] to share aloud, to share with each other and to offer evidence of their thinking and conclusions.” As written, this feedback aligns to an Effective rating, as there is no mention of student-initiated questions, or students challenging one another, which are the necessary criteria for the Highly Effective rating in questioning and discussions. In another observation document, the teacher was rated Effective in designing coherent instruction, yet the feedback written to the teacher included statements such as, “This is not an effective language objective” and, “It does not speak to what language your students will be learning.” Thus, teacher feedback is inconsistently aligned to the Danielson Framework for Teaching, and results in providing expectations that are not clear, particularly for those assigned the highest ratings.