Quality Review Report

2017-2018

P.S. 233 Langston Hughes
Elementary 18K233
9301 Avenue B
Brooklyn
NY 11236

Principal: Denean Stephens

Dates of Review:
April 24, 2018 - April 25, 2018

Lead Reviewer: Elsa Kortright-Torres
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. 233 Langston Hughes 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><strong>Instructional Core</strong></th>
<th><strong>Area</strong></th>
<th><strong>Rating</strong></th>
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</thead>
<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>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>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 Culture

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

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<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, Proficient</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, Developing</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

### Systems for Improvement

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

<table>
<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, 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, Proficient</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, Proficient</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, 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>Area of Focus, Developing</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Area of Celebration

| Quality Indicator: | 1.4 Positive Learning Environment | Rating: | Proficient |

Findings

The school’s approach to culture building and discipline includes outreach to families and professional learning and activities relative to a responsive classroom philosophy for all students and staff.

Impact

The school maintains a safe environment that promotes an inclusive culture where student learning and voice is welcomed and is leading towards the adoption of effective academic and personal behaviors.

Supporting Evidence

- Through a proactive and inclusive culture, the school promotes positive interactions among students and staff members. For example, through school-wide events such as the Harlem Renaissance in honor of Langston Hughes, the school’s namesake, there are a few activities offered throughout the year. Events include all students and their parents. For example, during Langston Hughes’s birthday, the school produces an art show case with student art work, participation in swing lessons, playing steel pan instruments, and performing in the modern band. Students also visit Langston Hughes’s house in Harlem. In addition, the students participate in a Little Miss and Little Mister Langston Hughes contest which takes place on a Saturday. In addition, students conduct research on noteworthy individuals from the Harlem Renaissance. Students reported feeling proud of being a student at Langston Hughes School because of his accomplishments and studying his life. The school culminates with a June Jam block party to thank the school community for the work done throughout the year.

- The school promotes positive interactions that result in a safe environment through the piloting of the restorative justice program. Teachers that have participated in the training have started to use the principles of restorative justice. Teachers report that students are taught social skills and in the beginning of the year, the students participate in team building activities. Parents report that their children feel safe at school and that teachers support their children by taking care of their needs. Parents also report that the plethora of school events make them feel included and treated as family members. For example, students participate in clubs every Friday. Clubs are run by teachers and parents appreciate that the teachers take their own time to teach their children some of their own gifts and talents.

- Through a process of including student and teacher voice, the school initiated Fab Friday. Students were surveyed to find out their interests and selected from a menu of activities to participate in for a period of 23 weeks. Teachers lead a club of their choosing according to their own interests. For example, one staff member expressed interest in natural hair design and care. Another staff member indicated that she was interested in cooking. Both staff members and the rest were charged with creating an overview of their proposed course. Students in grades three to five participate in at least one club every Friday. Students and teachers report that Fab Fridays are fun and allow teachers to demonstrate their talents.

- Families are supported in promoting the adoption of effective academic and personal behaviors of their children. Through various workshop opportunities, the school aligns their goals with parent outreach. For example, the school offered parent workshops on providing an overview of the New York State Assessments to help parents understand what their children experience and to inform them about how they can help their children. The workshop consisted of parents answering questions from past assessments. Another workshop offered free of charge was on teaching parents English. The workshops are offered twice a week. Opportunities such as these promote academic success for students.
Area of Focus

| Quality Indicator: | 5.1 Monitoring and Revising Systems | Rating: Developing |

Findings

School leaders and staff are developing a process to regularly monitor and adjust decisions affecting the instructional core, the quality of programs, and events to build school culture and expectations.

Impact

Although school leaders conduct classroom observations to evaluate teacher practices, monitoring of student progress using student performance data is limited and inconsistently used to make decisions about the instructional core. Decisions to support the Common Core Learning Standards by adjustments to school culture initiatives based on their effectiveness is limited.

Supporting Evidence

- A review of observation reports evidence compliance with using Danielson *Framework for Teaching* and the school leader’s schedule to ensure that observations are conducted in a timely manner. There is inconsistent evidence of a process in place to regularly use teacher observations and examination of student work products to inform curricula and instructional practices. Though observation reports evidence the evaluation of teaching practices, reports do not evidence the purposeful use of the Danielson *Framework for Teaching* and a cycle to provide teachers with effective feedback and next steps aligned to the Common Core to ensure effective teaching practices based on student needs.

- A review of the reading and math tracking levels sheets evidence a process that is developing to analyze student data by grade levels and subgroups. Though the tracking sheets are submitted from teachers to school leaders, there is no evidence that a system is in place to consistently and transparently analyze the data by subgroups to make curricula and instructional practice adjustments and build coherence based on student needs. The school leaders report using the tracking sheets is a way of knowing the percentage of students by class who are exhibiting growth. There is inconsistent evidence of this information being shared with teachers to make the necessary adjustments to improve student learning.

- Though there are several events to foster a positive culture in the school, school leaders and teachers are developing a process to regularly evaluate school culture relative to these events. For example, there are professional learning sessions scheduled from September until December. Sessions on setting up a positive classroom environment and creating activities to encourage home and school partnerships, as well as reviewing systems for documenting behaviors were held in September. However, there is limited evidence of follow up professional learning sessions or analysis of student behavior data to evaluate practices around maintaining a positive school environment and evaluating how high expectations are taking hold in the school.

- School leaders report that they share the schools’ expectations around preparing for middle school and college and careers with faculty and families during their regular parent-teacher conferences. There is also evidence that the school participates in career day. In addition, the professional learning plan includes sessions on what the instructional expectations or focus is for the year. There are School Leadership Team (SLT) meetings in which school leaders provide updates of school goals and initiatives. However, there is limited evidence of how expectations are evaluated using data shared with constituents. For example, in one SLT meeting minutes, there is limited evidence that there is data being used to substantiate this claim or adjustments to support the successful implementation of schoolwide programs.
Additional Finding

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

School leaders and faculty ensure that curricula are aligned to the Common Core State Standards and integrate the instructional shifts. Curricula and academic tasks consistently emphasize rigorous habits and higher-order skills.

Impact

Curricula are coherent and promote college and career readiness. Additionally, curricula emphasize rigorous habits and higher-order skills across grades and subjects so that all students, including students with disabilities and English Language Learners (ELLs), are supported.

Supporting Evidence

- A review of lesson plans and units of study across subjects and grade levels evidence alignment to the Common Core Learning Standards, content knowledge standards, and the instructional shifts. Across units, there is evidence of a balance of non-fiction and fiction texts, as well as supporting ideas with details. For example, in a grade three reading unit, students are tasked with reading *Bullfrog and Magnolia Circle* and then conduct research on the adaptation of frogs to complete a research-based narrative piece. In a grade four English Language Arts (ELA) unit, students will read *Love that Dog* to learn about narrative poetry. Students are tasked with learning about the main character and how his attitude changes by citing evidence from the text.

- In a grade two math lesson, students are tasked with using addition and subtraction within one hundred to solve word problems. Students need to explain their strategy and write about it with a drawing or a bar model of the equation. In a grade four math unit, students are charged with making sense of measurement problems and persevering while learning about perimeter and area. In a grade three social studies lesson about the development of China’s human made features, students are tasked with analyzing the pros and cons about the development of the Great Wall of China and have a debate about it. Curricula evidence the alignment to the Common Core Learning Standards and the instructional shifts.

- An analysis of the curricula revealed that lessons and units are planned using Webb’s *Depth of Knowledge* to create questions to promote student discussions using higher levels of thinking and the four levels of cognitive demand from Smith and Stein (1998). Rigorous tasks are evident in performance tasks including for ELLs and students with disabilities. For example, in a grade two ELA lesson, the teacher plans on asking questions such as “What makes someone a hero?” In a grade five social studies lesson, there are questions to learn about the Continental Drift such as, “What does the Fossil Evidence map tell us about Pangaea and the Continent Drift?” Students will be working in groups, participate in a jigsaw strategy to read and find relevant information to share out. Rigorous activities such as these, are evident in lesson plans across grades and subjects.
Additional Finding

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<tr>
<th>Quality Indicator:</th>
<th>1.2 Pedagogy</th>
<th>Rating:</th>
<th>Developing</th>
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Findings
Across classrooms, flexible student groups reflect teachers’ work toward providing students with multiple entry points into lessons. However, as evidenced in student work and discussions, tasks and assignments are not yet designed with scaffolds or supports for different learners.

Impact
Students were unevenly engaged in appropriately challenging tasks and student discussions inconsistently reflect high levels of student participation.

Supporting Evidence

- In a grade two Integrated Co-Teaching (ICT) classroom, students were arranged in groups and discussed the answer to an essential question, “What makes someone a hero?” The teacher recorded student responses on chart paper when students shared out. This was an introduction to *Dex The Heart of a Hero*, a story in the students’ anthology. While there were opportunities to turn and talk, such as when answering the essential question, students were all given the same task of finding one word in the text that they felt is the most important and writing a rationale. Students were paired up to take turns reading the same text and complete the same worksheet. In a self-contained kindergarten through grade two special education class, to end the lesson, the teacher led a discussion about the activity the students had just finished, which was to use non-standard units of measurements to compare the length of two objects. Students were asked what non-standard unit of measurement they used and what they learned. While there was an opportunity for students to use objects such as clips, connecting cubes, tiles, as well as standard units such as centimeters and inches to measure, there were uneven demonstrations by all students including ELLs and student with disabilities of higher-order thinking skills in student work products.

- In a grade four math lesson, the teacher announced that the lesson would be on perimeter. He then provided a real-life scenario of having to build a fence for his dog and he needed to know how much fencing he needed. He asked the students to turn and talk about the type of space the dog would need. Students were provided with a copy of the notes for the lesson to refer to as the teacher asked questions such as, “What is the next step?” to elicit how to solve the perimeter of a rectangular figure. Students followed along with the teacher until the problem was solved. In a grade three social studies lesson, the teacher announced that students would be looking at images and making inferences about human made land features. The teacher asked questions such as, “When we say human made, who makes them?” and “Why was the Great Wall of China built?” A few students responded and thus dominated the discussion.

- In a grade five ELA lesson, the teacher asked questions to activate prior knowledge about elements of narrative nonfiction such as, “What part is factual?” and “What part is embedded in the plot?” A student was called to answer the questions. The teacher provided an opportunity to turn and talk about the two questions. Some students participated in the discussion while others were quiet. In a grade five lesson, about Pangaea or how continents drift, the teacher presented an activity to define academic vocabulary by having students ask each other the definition and then confirming it. There were some students that did not know the meaning of the words, so their partner would read it and then move to another partner with a different word. One group of students worked with the teacher to match the word to its definition. Some students did not participate. Across classrooms, student discussions and student work products reflect uneven levels of participation and thinking.
Additional Finding

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<th>Quality Indicator:</th>
<th>2.2 Assessment</th>
<th>Rating:</th>
<th>Developing</th>
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Findings

The school is beginning to work toward the use of common assessments. Teachers’ assessment practices inconsistently reflect the use of ongoing checks for understanding.

Impact

Results of common assessments are used to identify students who need extra support in math and ELA. Teachers, inconsistently, utilize checks for understanding and results of common assessments to modify instruction to meet students’ learning needs.

Supporting Evidence

- The school uses running records and the Developmental Reading Assessment (DRA) to keep track of student progress in reading. Student progress is tracked by school leaders by grade levels by collecting each teacher’s Independent Reading Level (IRL) tracking sheet. School leaders calculate the number of students who are reading at grade level. School leaders report that they have seen that students are moving ahead from one reading level to the next and know from looking at the tracking sheet who are the students who need more supports, such as the ELLs and students with disabilities. During inquiry team meetings interventions for students not meeting benchmark goals are discussed, such as recommendations for students to attend Saturday Academy. Teachers form groups in their classrooms based on the reading levels of students. Teachers reported that groups are flexible depending on the reading levels of students. Common assessments are used to track reading levels, but have yet to be used to make informed curricula adjustments or to make grade level instructional decisions.

- The school uses the Basic Math Skill (BMS) tracking sheet to track the progress of students after administering the Basic Skills Math assessments. School leaders gather the results by class and have started to look at the data to make informed curriculum decisions. For example, in the beginning of the school year, teachers administer a baseline assessment. Thereafter, teachers track how their students are doing using pre- and post- GOMath! assessments. Teachers reported that they analyze the results of the assessments and conduct item analysis. Teachers realized that fractions were a challenge for third graders, so they decided to provide more visuals for ELLs and for students with disabilities. Common assessments are being used by teachers and school leaders to monitor student growth, however, the results are inconsistently used to adjust curricula and instruction across grades and subject areas.

- School leaders reported that teachers use thumbs up and thumbs down, color coded systems, as well as questioning to monitor and check for understanding. For example, one classroom had green (I am having trouble), blue and yellow cards on each student desk but these were not used during the lesson. In a second grade, ICT class, the students were introduced to an anchor text and were asked if they thought a classmate in offering a prediction was right or wrong. Students called out in unison “no.” Similarly, in a grade five ELA lesson, the teacher read her own writing on a protocol outline and asked the students to show her with their fingers the rating they would give her for completing round one of the Campfire Protocol. Most students raised their hands showing their rating and the teacher asked that they go back and review the learning target. In a grade four lesson on perimeter, the teacher posed a real-life scenario of putting up a fence for a dog. He asked for ways to find out how much fencing is needed in feet. Students were called after raising their hands to answer his questions. Though these examples use some use of checks for understanding, there are inconsistent uses of ongoing checks for understanding to adjust instruction to meet students’ learning needs.
Findings

The majority of teachers are engaged in inquiry-based collaborations. Teacher teams consistently analyze reading and math progress of students they share or on whom they are focused.

Impact

Teachers have increased their capacity by sharing ideas to implement the Common Core Learning Standards and that have resulted in students showing growth in reading and math.

Supporting Evidence

- Teachers meet weekly to analyze student data. For example, the second-grade team met to discuss the middle of the year district-wide assessment and conduct an item analysis. A teacher presented student work of students who demonstrated not meeting the standard of decomposing tens and ones. She sorted the work by the number out of three questions that the students answered correctly. She presented the work and asked her colleagues to give her feedback on how to address the needs of the students to help them master this standard. The team concluded that the students needed more practice with their ones and that they are beginning to break apart numbers, but not using their understanding of place value to break hundreds and tens into ones. The teachers discussed having small group mini-lessons and to have students practice using smaller numbers with the use of manipulatives. They also talked about pairing students who have mastered the concept to be paired up with those that have not. The group ended the meeting by discussing the next task to be presented at the next meeting.

- The kindergarten teacher team meets weekly to discuss the progress of a focus group such as below, middle, and above level students. Each week a teacher presents the work based on a specific task for their focus group. For example, students were tasked with writing an informational piece. The teacher presented writing for three students. The teachers analyzed the work and concluded that the above level student should practice writing with space between words and the below level student needs to learn basic sight words.

- A fifth-grade team meets regularly to monitor rigor and questioning to deepen student understanding. For example, the teachers discussed the use of “Restate” the question, “Answer” the question, “Cite” evidence and examples, “Explain”, extend, elaborate, “Re-read” and revise, and “Sum” it up (RACERS), strategy to write a short response after reading a nonfiction text and identifying the main idea and details of the text. After analyzing student work, the teachers decided to use the 1-3-6 protocol to help students share their thoughts with other students and to elaborate how to add details to their answers. Teacher teams engage in professional collaborations that have, as reported by teachers and school leaders, strengthened their instructional capacity and improved reading and math levels of students.