Quality Review Report

2017-2018

P.S. 251 Paerdegat
Elementary 22K251
1037 East 54 Street
Brooklyn
NY 11234

Principal: Sheldon Noel

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

Lead Reviewer: Jennifer Eusanio
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. 251 Paerdegat 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>To what extent does the school...</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>Additional Finding</td>
<td>Proficient</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1.2 Develop teacher pedagogy from a coherent set of beliefs about how students learn best that is informed by the instructional shifts and Danielson Framework for Teaching, aligned to the curricula, engaging, and meets the needs of all learners so that all students produce meaningful work products</td>
<td>Area of Focus</td>
<td>Developing</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2.2 Align assessments to curricula, use on-going assessment and grading practices, and analyze information on student learning outcomes to adjust instructional decisions at the team and classroom levels</td>
<td>Additional Finding</td>
<td>Developing</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
## School Culture

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

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Area</th>
<th>Rating</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1.4</td>
<td>Maintain a culture of mutual trust and positive attitudes that supports the academic and personal growth of students and adults</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3.4</td>
<td>Establish a culture for learning that communicates high expectations to staff, students and families, and provide supports to achieve those expectations</td>
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## Systems for Improvement

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

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Area</th>
<th>Rating</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1.3</td>
<td>Make strategic organizational decisions to support the school’s instructional goals and meet student learning needs, as evidenced by meaningful student work products</td>
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<tr>
<td>3.1</td>
<td>Establish a coherent vision of school improvement that is reflected in a short list of focused, data-based goals that are tracked for progress and are understood and supported by the entire school community</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4.1</td>
<td>Observe teachers using the Danielson Framework for Teaching along with the analysis of learning outcomes to elevate school-wide instructional practices and implement strategies that promote professional growth and reflection</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4.2</td>
<td>Engage in structured professional collaborations on teams using an inquiry approach that promotes shared leadership and focuses on improved student learning</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5.1</td>
<td>Evaluate the quality of school-level decisions, making adjustments as needed to increase the coherence of policies and practices across the school, with particular attention to the CCLS</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Area of Celebration

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

Findings
School leaders consistently communicate high expectations on increasing student engagement and differentiation of tasks to staff. School leaders and staff consistently communicate the schoolwide expectations to families and convey their child’s progress in school.

Impact
School leaders hold the staff accountable for implementing the school’s instructional focus towards meeting the teacher’s performance goals. Parents are aware of their child’s progress towards meeting the state-adopted national standards.

Supporting Evidence

- Structures to communicate the schoolwide expectations related to student engagement and assessment-based instruction are provided through professional learning sessions, *The Paerdegat Newsletter*, and through team leader emails that relate information discussed during the instructional cabinet meetings. In one newsletter, the instructional focus is listed to serve as a reminder for the staff and provides strengths and areas for improvement known as glows and grows. In addition, practices related to the instructional focus are mentioned in the newsletter such as ensuring that student conferring with data collection occurs daily and all lessons reflect the Common Core Learning Standards. Teachers reported that they are aware of the school’s focus through conversations with their grade leaders who share ideas offered during monthly cabinet meetings including upcoming deadlines for submitting assessments and progress towards the school’s goals. Additionally, teachers shared that professional learning sessions on using new online platforms for student engagement and on strategies to assist them with planning differentiated, tiered tasks, have improved their abilities to design coherent instruction.

- School leaders provide feedback on student progress and common strategies used across grades through grade-level team meetings. Additionally, school leaders collect samples of student work to assess the quality of feedback, level of rigor, and efforts to include scaffolds for differentiation in tasks. One piece of feedback on a math work product using addends suggested that the teacher should allow students to re-evaluate their work and come up with their own examples of combining three addends. Furthermore, a review of post-observation feedback revealed that teachers are provided with suggestions to support their growth in meeting the school’s instructional expectations, especially on the grouping of students and forming tiered tasks.

- Parents shared that ongoing communication between teachers is a common practice across the school. They reported that teachers make a concerted effort to share how their child is performing in school through phone calls, emails, and progress reports. Parent workshops are provided to ensure families are aware of the grade-level reading benchmark expectations to help them understand their child’s performance and decipher whether their child is just decoding well or reading with comprehension. Questions are provided to assist parents in determining whether their child’s book is too easy or hard for them or even to further engage their child with the text. March Math Madness night was another event that helped parents to understand the math standards and how to use the new online math program at home to support their child’s progress, which overall, leads to a stronger home-school connection.
## Area of Focus

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Quality Indicator:</th>
<th>1.2 Pedagogy</th>
<th>Rating:</th>
<th>Developing</th>
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### Findings

Although scaffolds and supports are provided in some classes, teacher strategies have yet to reflect the consistent use multiple entry points into the curricula reflected in student work products and discussions.

### Impact

Missed opportunities during instruction result in uneven levels of higher-order thinking and participation within student work products and discussions in some classes.

### Supporting Evidence

- Across classes, teachers develop tiered tasks to engage students in the curricula, yet in some classes observed, students were unable to demonstrate higher-order thinking. In some classes, the use of the tasks and additional resources include manipulatives, vocabulary building techniques, questioning, and graphic organizers which leads to critical thinking reflected in student work. In a fourth grade Integrated Co-teaching (ICT) English Language Arts (ELA) class, students worked in groups to respond to text-based questions using an informational book on volcanoes. Both teachers engaged students using a continuum of questions across the Webb’s Depth of Knowledge (DOK) matrix, which led students to draw inferences, analyze information and synthesize to develop ideas. One group used the text and information from a website to make the claim that volcanic eruptions have both negative and positive effects on the environment. The students used details from both sources to support this claim furthering alignment to unit objectives and fostering increased student thinking. However, in other classes, demonstration of critical thinking and the use of analysis or synthesis was not as prevalent in student responses or work.

- In a fourth-grade science class, students used a graduated cylinder to determine water displacement and the volume of a marble. Although students were asked to engage in a hands-on activity in a lab, additional scaffolds or extensions were not provided which led most of the students’ responses to reflect the recall of facts with low-level results. In a third grade ELA class, the learning objective focused on students determining how authors use similes as comparisons. However, students were mostly focused on developing their own similes and illustrating them which did not further challenge their thinking towards meeting the objective of the lesson.

- In some classes, the majority of the lesson was led by teachers with questioning directed to specific students, thus hindering student participation. In a third grade ICT math class, most of the questioning was directed by the teacher with limited opportunities for student-to-student discussion. Similarly, in a second-grade math class for students with disabilities, although students were provided an opportunity to discuss a question with a partner, the question posed did not allow students to fully explain their answers and not all students were fully engaged in deepening each other’s thinking.
Additional Finding

**Quality Indicator:** 1.1 Curriculum

**Rating:** Proficient

Findings

School staff ensure that curricula is aligned to the Common Core Learning Standards and/or content standards, integrate text-based, source reliant, fluency and application of the instructional shifts to emphasize rigor in tasks for a variety of learners.

Impact

Across grades and subject areas, curricula planning reflects tasks with rigorous habits, thus leading to planning documents which build coherence and promote college and career readiness for all students.

Supporting Evidence

- This year, teachers, and school leaders have made a concerted effort to revamp their math pacing calendar to align further with the major clusters in the Common Core Learning Standards and focus tasks towards meeting these requirements. A review of math standards, data and a review of prior exams were used to inform the refinements to the curricula. Additionally, planning occurs between second and third grade teachers to modify their math curricula and supplement materials in order to integrate more problem solving and fluency skills with multiplication and division. Additionally, a review of pacing calendars and units reveals an emphasis on math vocabulary, an ELA shift, to aid students with deep understanding and making real-world application when solving word problems. In fifth-grade, a unit on geometry contains words such as congruent and names of different shapes like pentagon. Teachers reported that this unit was moved to the month of April to provide an emphasis on numbers and operations and algebra in the beginning of the year, allowing for more time to reinforce these skills which are prevalent on the state exam and in the standards.

- Across ELA unit plans, there is an emphasis on citing evidence and developing claims which connects to the instructional shifts on creating text-based answers and writing from sources. In a third grade ELA unit on poetry, students will write an opinion about the relationship between two characters using a text and as well use details in support of their opinion. Similarly, in a fourth grade ELA unit plan, students will be writing an essay which discusses the effects of change to the Earth’s surface using details from multiple texts.

- A review of schoolwide unit and lesson plans reveals an integration of tasks which align to Webb’s DOK level three, which involves strategic thinking and reasoning. In a kindergarten science/ELA unit plan for diverse learners, students will engage in research on animals to create an informational book. In a second-grade math unit on measurement and data, students will work on interpreting picture and bar graphs and solve problems using data. In a grade one ELA unit, students will write a response to a story and use information from the text and illustrations to assist them with developing a character analysis. Taken together, planning documents reflect tasks which emphasize higher-order thinking.
Additional Finding

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

Although the school staff uses rubrics and other assessment practices, checks for understanding and standards-based self-assessment have yet to be a consistent common practice.

Impact

In some classes, missed opportunities for actionable feedback tied to learning standards and in-the-moment adjustments limit the ability for students to meet learning objectives.

Supporting Evidence

- Across the school, bulletin boards contain student work with feedback forms consisting of strengths, and areas for improvement known as glows and grows. Additionally, the feedback contains an area for next steps where teachers or students place comments leading to the student’s plan for improvement. At times, feedback was tied to a standards-based rubric where areas of the rubric were highlighted to assist the student in determining their growth areas and use teacher comments to support their next steps. Yet, some of the work did not connect to a rubric nor was it attached, revealing a lack of marked areas to support the student’s next steps. To obtain a Level 4 in a math task, a student must demonstrate precise math language in their response. For one task, a student received a Level 4 which indicated that the student used precise math language to consolidate their thinking according to the rubric. Yet the feedback in the growth area contained a comment for the student to use math language, which provides feedback that did not match the grade. On another math task, the growth area stated that the student should use a mixed number, yet the next steps indicated that the student should study math vocabulary which didn’t match the growth area, nor did it provide a strategy to support the student.

- In an interview, students reviewed their work and feedback forms to share their growth areas. Most of the students’ work did not contain a rubric that aligned to their grade, nor specific strategies to work on for a higher grade. Additionally, some students were unable to share their own specific strategies for how they would work towards improving their grade. Furthermore, some students were unable to read their teachers comments which limited their ability to use the feedback provided to improve their work.

- In some classes, checks for understanding employ “Hinge” questions, or inquiry-based questions to gauge student understanding, to determine whether students had misconceptions in need of further exploring and reteaching. In a fifth grade ICT math class with English Language Learners, as students’ misconceptions were revealed during a whole class share and within groups, the classroom teacher and the English as a New Language (ENL) teacher asked students about the meaning of equilateral and the difference between two types of triangles. One teacher used examples and asked other students to define these terms as well as retaught the concept using images to help students understand the math terms before moving into the independent practice portion of the lesson. However, in other classes, adjustments were not as clearly defined within teacher questions. In a third-grade class, teachers tended to provide the answers after asking questions and did not reteach the concept. In a kindergarten class, students were asked to write how animals use their different body parts with a focus on zebras. However, a review of student work and verbal responses focused mainly on facts about what was generally learned about zebras and no redirection was provided to ensure students were meeting the learning outcome. Furthermore, a review of students’ work reflects self-assessment and the use of standards-based rubrics are not a common practice in some classes or subject areas.
Additional Finding

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

School leaders support the development of teachers through frequent cycles of grade-level and vertical observation across grades using student work and data and provide glow and grow feedback connected to the Danielson Framework for Teaching.

Impact

Ongoing feedback structures clearly articulate clear expectations for teacher practice and supports their growth which is elevating the quality of instruction.

Supporting Evidence

- A review of feedback reveals that teachers receive feedback connected to the school’s instructional focus on increasing student engagement. In one report, the feedback shares glows in that the teacher provided the students with open-ended questions to promote higher-order thinking yet needed to plan activities to enrich students who were more able to solve word problems independently, thus recommending using more challenging activities. In one of the following observation reports, feedback reflects that this component serves as a strength for the teacher where activities were viewed as “clearly differentiated” and “supported different learning levels and styles” throughout the lesson. A review of teacher data reflects that there is an increase in the number of teachers receiving effective ratings in student engagement demonstrating a growth in practices that fall under this component.

- A review of teacher observation data reflects that the majority of the school has received feedback in one to two-month cycles. Additionally, school leaders conduct vertical observations within their observation cycles to provide feedback based on individual programs such as the ICT or ENL programs and shares their glows and grows via conversations and emails. Student work and data are reflected upon during the debrief with the teacher to help tailor the recommendations based on the class population as well as to ensure student learning needs are met, which is noted in all observation reports. Teachers report that the feedback provided is timely and supports their next steps towards improvement. One teacher shared that as a result of her feedback sessions, she is now using more exit slips and formative assessment questions in her lessons to gauge students’ understanding of the learning objective. Another teacher shared that her recommendations support her work around using more facilitative approaches in the classroom to allow students to take on a more independent stance during independent time or discussion. Taken together, teachers are using the feedback process and student work to build their capacity and further shape the quality of planning and instruction.

- An additional trend in feedback shows that school leaders provide glows and grows on questioning and discussion, one of the Danielson Framework for Teaching components. A review of teacher observations shows that feedback is consistently provided in this area for each observation. In one observation report, the school leader suggested that the teacher use DOK question stems as a resource to plan rigorous questions. During the following two observations, the report reflects an effective rating in this area where the teacher used more rigorous questions to engage students in the lesson and promote their thinking through discussion. A review of teacher data shows a 17-point increase from 69 percent in the questioning and discussion component thus strengthening the quality of teacher practices in this area.
Additional Finding

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

Findings

The majority of teachers meet in structured, grade-level inquiry-based teams which utilize a distributive leadership approach for modifying instructional approaches.

Impact

Teacher teams have a voice in curricula and instructional decisions which promote the achievement of the school’s ELA and math goals, the implementation of Common Core Learning Standards, thus strengthening their instructional and leadership capacity in support of student learning across the school.

Supporting Evidence

- Teachers meet in grade-level teams weekly to review and analyze student data and work and develop action plans and strategies for target students, connected to the school’s goals on increasing student reading and math performance. During an interview, one fourth-grade teacher shared that her team reviewed student work, and determined that the student had difficulty with problem solving. Afterwards, the teacher decided to tier her instruction and have the student start with one-step word problems and use annotation strategies to help him unlock the problem. Once the student was able to engage with one-step word problems, the teacher moved into two-step problems. Additionally, teachers stated that looking at student work has helped them reflect on their practices and consider the use of different scaffolds and strategies including sentence starters, as well as providing students with roles as discussion techniques to deepen their conversations in ELA and math.

- During a team meeting, fifth-grade teachers reviewed the Problem of the Week for a group of students, which is connected to the school’s goal in increasing math performance. After reviewing and reflecting on the work, the teachers noticed that the students were having difficulty determining what the task was asking of them before solving the problem. One teacher shared her new learning from a recent math workshop stating that students tend to have difficulty visualizing the whole problem and just dive into it without understanding. One strategy discussed was modeling how to read a word problem and use visualization to help students understand what the problem is asking. All teachers agreed to conduct a reteaching of the concept and model how to visualize a problem before solving it while using an annotation strategy. Additionally, teachers considered building a checklist and graphic organizer to help students during independent practice when solving word problems.

- Teacher teams have the facility to make instructional decisions including adjustments to curricula in support of their students’ learning needs. The second-grade team worked with school leaders in creating vocabulary binders and interactive word rings as students were learning new vocabulary and needed tools for reinforcing their use of these words which were connected to the new ELA curricula. Similarly, the first-grade team has worked with school leaders and developed reflective writing journals to allow for self-reflection at the end of lessons which assist teachers in gauging student understanding of concepts taught within a lesson. All teams have voiced the need to adjust the pacing of curricula which has led to a revamping of the math curricular calendar using student data and other tools as a guide. Taken together, team-led instructional decisions are promoting schoolwide goals in fostering increased student performance.