Quality Review Report

2017-2018

P.S. 256 Benjamin Banneker
Elementary 13K256
114 Kosciuszko Street
Brooklyn
NY 11216

Principal: Sharyn Hemphill

Dates of Review:
December 19, 2017 - December 20, 2017

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. 256 Benjamin Banneker serves students in grade PK through grade 5. You will find information about this school, including enrollment, attendance, student demographics, and data regarding academic performance, at http://schools.nyc.gov/Accountability/tools/report/default.htm.

School Quality Ratings

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Instructional Core</th>
<th>Area</th>
<th>Rating</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>To what extent does the school…</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>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>Area of Celebration</td>
<td>Proficient</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>Area of Focus</td>
<td>Developing</td>
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</tbody>
</table>
## School Culture

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

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Area</th>
<th>Rating</th>
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</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>Additional Finding</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3.4 Establish a culture for learning that communicates high expectations to staff, students and families, and provide supports to achieve those expectations</td>
<td>Additional Finding</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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</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>
</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>
</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>
</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>
</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>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Area of Celebration

Quality Indicator: 1.2 Pedagogy

Rating: Proficient

Findings

Across classrooms, teaching practices align to the belief that students learn best through use of the workshop model and small group instruction. Teaching strategies consistently provide multiple entry points into the curricula, with a focus on scaffolding learning.

Impact

Students, including students with disabilities and English Language Learners (ELLs) are engaged in challenging classroom tasks that demonstrate higher-order thinking.

Supporting Evidence

- Across classrooms, teachers utilize the workshop model to ensure clear instruction and student learning. Across classes, students work in small groups, and teachers guide small group instruction for those needing further guidance. For example, in a kindergarten reading class, students sat in groups, but independently practiced skills of “super readers” such as following along as they read with popsicle sticks, or circling sight words as they explored their independent novels. Sometimes the students stopped to share unknown or interesting words with a peer. While students worked independently, the teacher worked with a small group of students to provide further instruction on using these strategies through a shared reading. Similarly, in a fifth grade class, the teacher finished a mini lesson with students on finding the main idea and the important details in a non-fiction text, and then had students work in groups to summarize sections of a science text. As students worked together in small groups, the teacher worked directly with a small group to ensure they learned how to use evidence from the text to create a summary. This use of the workshop model to provide students with explicit instruction, and then opportunities to work for most of the period, on their own, or with peers was common across classrooms.

- Teaching strategies across the classes included providing students scaffolds and supports to ensure they could demonstrate higher order thinking. Anchor charts, reading manipulatives, such as pointers and highlighters were common across classrooms. Across the content areas, including math, teachers used questioning, and ensured that students underlined key facts and understood tasks. In a fourth grade classroom, students worked together to solve word problems targeting multiplication and division. Supports such as a place value anchor chart, multiplication tables, and white boards were provided to the students. As students worked, the teacher circulated, and asked the question “What are some things that you pulled out of the problem that were important?” This question prompted students to go back to what they had underlined in the problem and share their thinking with their teacher and their peer. For other students, the teacher reviewed what they had written on their white boards and prompted, “Think about how we use commas. Take another look at the place value chart and explain your work to your partner.” These supports, consistently used across classes, helped students to demonstrate higher-order skills, such as problem solving, explaining their strategies and revising their work.

- In the kindergarten class mentioned above, students had several books in their baggies, making it easy for students to move on to new texts without needing additional support, providing a built in extension. In many classes, students used sentence starters and provided vocabulary definitions to bolster student-to-student conversations in small group and partnered discussions across the content areas.
Findings

The use of common assessments to monitor student progress throughout the year is not as yet consistently employed. Across classrooms, teachers check understanding of some students during the lesson.

Impact

The analysis of common assessments is inconsistently used throughout the year to adjust curricula and instruction. During lessons teachers as of yet do not make effective adjustments to their instruction to meet all students’ learning needs.

Supporting Evidence

- A review of school records, including teacher binders makes clear that teachers record student performance levels. However, only state spring assessments are used to make adjustments to the curricula and instruction. For example, one teacher binder indicated that the teacher reviewed individual student performance on the New York State math exam from the previous year, and highlighted the specific questions that students answered correctly. In a question and answer session, fifth grade teachers explained that they reviewed the data from their students’ fourth grade scores, and realigned their units to provide students with additional support on fractions at the beginning of the year. Although teachers mentioned that they gave pre and post-assessments for each math unit, teachers were not able to demonstrate ways that they used this common assessment data to adjust curricula and instruction throughout the school year, thus limiting the accurate measurement of student progress towards goals as the year progresses.

- In English Language Arts (ELA), some teachers use running records and pre and post assessments to plan possible next steps, such as reorganizing units and creating small groups for re-teaching certain topics. Though small group instruction was evident in classes visited, there was seldom evidence of planning for the small groups in lesson plans, or evidence of other adjustments in the curricula. Kindergarten teachers shared they base their reading groups and instruction on data from running record assessments given in December. The results are used to create tasks for students, such as working on letters and sounds, or sight words. For other grades and subjects, curricula maps and lesson plans did not evidence changes to the curricula based on common assessments.

- Checks for understanding and recording student thinking during teacher-led small groups were common across classrooms. Checks for understanding and adjustments were not as common for all of the other children in the class. In a second grade Integrated Co-Teaching (ICT) class where students were learning contractions, the teacher asked students for thumbs up or thumbs down if they understood how to use contractions. In a math class, teachers circulated among the students and asked questions as they worked, however, notes about their thinking were not recorded. As students finished problems and moved on to new ones, they wiped their work off their white board. Thus limiting how the teacher would assess student thinking. In another math class, the teacher stopped to make adjustments for a few struggling students, but other student work went unchecked during the period creating inconsistencies in how teachers measure which adjustments are necessary to meet student learning needs.
Additional Finding

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

The school’s curricula are becoming aligned to the Common Core Learning Standards, and teachers continue to align lessons to the standards and the instructional shifts with a focus on deep understanding in math. The written curricula and tasks do not yet consistently reflect planning and refinement using student work and data.

Impact

The curricula are inconsistently accessible to a variety of learners limiting all students from becoming cognitively engaged.

Supporting Evidence

- ELA and math units demonstrate alignment to the Common Core standards, and instructional shifts, particularly text-based answers in literacy, and deep understanding in math. Teachers College Reading units were shared, as were teacher’s guides for Eureka Math, both of which are aligned to the Common Core. A review of lesson plans indicated that some of them aligned to the Common Core standards. One fourth grade plan on multiplying two-digit multiples of 10 by two-digit multiples of 10 with an area model addressed the grade level standards. Again in a fifth grade lesson plan addressing the writing of a summary for non-fiction text connects to the Common Core but where the standard required that students determine two or more main ideas of a text, the task in the lesson plan asked students to read one paragraph and find one main idea. While this is connected to the standard, the task falls short of the rigor required in addressing the standard.

- Social studies unit plans inconsistently included Common Core standards, including research skills and topics of focus. The fourth grade unit on the Iroquois and Algonquians in New York connected to the standards related to explaining events and historical concepts, and interpreting visual information. However, it did not connect to any thinking and process skills in the discipline. In science, the New York City (NYC) Scope and Sequence was shared as evidence of curriculum planning, along with a kindergarten and fifth grade lesson plan. One lesson aligned to the New York State science standards from 2004, which have since been updated to situate the lesson on magnetism to grade four rather than five. The other lesson plan aligned to the Science, Technology, Engineering, and Math standards for Georgia kindergarten students. Both of these lessons aligned to standards outside of the NYC Scope and Sequence for science. As yet, the school leaders and faculty are still in the process of aligning the curricula to the content standards.

- In a few of the lesson plans reviewed there was evidence of refinement of the curricula to provide access to a diversity of learners. There was differentiation indicated for student groups in math and social studies plans. One math lesson noted that below level students would complete a graphic organizer, and receive additional modeling from the teacher. The on level plan required students to complete ten problems on their own. The above level asked students to complete the ten problems, and then create two more problems of their own. Specific planning to address the needs of students with disabilities or English Language Learners was inconsistently addressed in the plans limiting the cognitive engagement of ELLs and students with disabilities.
Findings

School leaders regularly communicate expectations to staff, with an emphasis on student grouping, close reading strategies and looking at student work. Teachers and school staff regularly inform parents regarding student progress.

Impact

Teachers are held accountable and are provided with support to achieve expectations set by school leaders. Teachers work closely with parents to understand student progress and expectations for success.

Supporting Evidence

- School leaders utilize a faculty handbook, curricula maps and assessment calendars to communicate high expectations to the staff. All teachers are expected to use the workshop model and small group work in classrooms. The school has weekly professional learning connected to school wide expectations, on topics such as shared reading, small group instruction, using assessment grids, the reading workshop, and using protocols to look at student work. To ensure that new learning is implemented, a staff developer from Teachers College supports the school leaders in providing professional learning, and observing teachers in the classroom.

- A review of professional learning records articulate clear expectations for instruction, such as a presentation, which addressed best practices for math instruction. A slide show discussed and demonstrated well designed tasks, how to conduct number talks, and reviewed problem-solving strategies to be taught to students. Teachers expressed a desire to have teachers lead professional learning sessions for one another again, articulating a desire for teachers to participate in holding each other mutually accountable for shared expectations.

- Parents shared that teachers and staff consistently communicate with them about their children’s progress, through daily conversations, phone calls, emails, and in more formal ways, such as progress reports and report cards. Parents explained that they used to send students home with the progress reports and report cards, and sometimes students wouldn’t share them. Now, the school provides progress reports and report cards at parent-teacher conferences, and Parent Teacher Association meetings, where parents have the opportunity to talk with teachers and other staff about progress. Parents explained that the school offers workshops to help parents understand the demands of the Common Core. In September, teachers and staff hosted a Parent Curricula Night, to help them learn about the curricula for each grade, homework expectations, projects and upcoming class trips.

- At a question and answer session with parents, the parents of fifth grade students praised the staff’s efforts at helping them to select the right middle school for their children. Parents explained that the parent coordinator and guidance counselor make sure that they received the middle school guide and application, and provided one-on-one support in helping families to complete them. One parent expressed that they felt inundated by all of the information presented at a middle school fair that she attended, and praised the school's guidance counselor for taking her to visit schools where they thought her child might best excel. The guidance counselor also helped them to plan how the child would travel alone to their new school.
## Additional Finding

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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 with effective, accurate, and timely feedback through shared cycles of observations aligned with the Danielson *Framework for Teaching*.

### Impact

Feedback aligned to initial planning conferences, articulates clear expectations and promotes professional growth.

### Supporting Evidence

- A cycle of observations supports elevating schoolwide instructional practices targeting selected components of the Danielson *Framework for Teaching*. School leaders provide feedback and specific evidence from classroom observations on Annual Professional Performance Review teacher observation forms for each evaluated component. Suggestions to maintain or promote the observed component rated are included with lesson-specific evidence. For example, one teacher observation report reflected feedback of developing practices for the component designing coherent instruction. One suggestion from the administrative observer was to create differentiated learning activities and materials for students. It was further suggested, “To enhance students’ cognitive skills and their understanding of close reading, plan lessons utilizing structures shown in professional development.” Another observation report recommended, “To support students in distinguishing between reasons and examples…try using two different color pencils or marker to underline or highlight text.”

- Staff value the timely feedback they receive from observations to push their instructional development. Conversations between school leaders and teachers occur immediately at the end of the observation period for brief, but timely feedback. The immediate feedback helps provide an actionable lens to identify “one thing [they] need to discuss.” The written feedback and more comprehensive debrief is provided within a week. Teachers identify areas they could improve their instruction and/or planning for future lessons during that subsequent meeting.

- Communication of clear expectations to teachers support their growth and professional development. Teachers are urged to read their feedback and next steps carefully, so implementation of next steps can be observed at subsequent observations. One teacher was provided a professional text regarding planning and implementation of close reading strategies to enhance students’ cognitive skills and understanding. Similarly, another teachers’ observation report celebrated the total engagement of all students during a balanced literacy lesson with clear differentiation so all students’ needs and learning were met. Some teachers also reflect on their professional goal during feedback conferences and identify steps they are taking towards achieving it. For example, one teacher who stated they are “very comfortable with math,” has purposefully focused on improving their ELA lessons to be equally effective as math.
**Additional Finding**

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

Teacher teams look at student work and analyze student data for their classes. As the school has decreased in size, new distributive leadership structures are still developing.

**Impact**

The collaborative work in which teachers engage allow for the sharing of instructional strategies, however, it does not typically result in progress toward goals for groups of students. Teachers are included in key decisions that affect student learning and take on informal leadership roles.

**Supporting Evidence**

- The majority of teachers are engaged in professional collaborations on upper and lower grade teacher teams, who meet twice a month to look at student work, and share strategies that they are using to support learners in ELA and math. At a teacher team meeting of three upper grade teachers, the work of two students was reviewed. The students were selected from the same class, and the presenting teacher shared that she selected a student who was below grade level in math, and one that was on grade level. The teachers used a protocol to review what the student could do, and whether or not they were able to use a recently taught strategy that addressed labeling her work. Teachers also evaluated the student work samples for what the student was not able to solve correctly. Teachers used the close analysis of the two pieces of student work to surface student understandings and to reflect on strategies from other lessons that showed up in the student work (jumping, rather than counting by ones on the number line), as well as the possibilities for re-teaching. Teachers shared that this process of looking at the work of a few students whose work demonstrates that they are below or at grade level to make decisions about instructional next steps is a common practice at their team meetings. One teacher expressed how this process has helped her to improve her planning practices.

- Teachers at both the team meeting and question and answer session shared that teachers individually track student progress throughout the year, in progress reports and report cards. Teachers shared that although looking at student work is a common practice at teacher team meetings, they do not measure progress toward goals for groups of students when they meet together as a team.

- As the school has decreased in size, teachers and school leaders explained that formal teacher leadership roles have not been continued. Teachers expressed that they are welcome to share their ideas about the curricula, professional learning needs, and strategies that they use in the classroom. Specified leadership roles no longer exist as many grades have just one teacher. During the teacher team meeting, one teacher took the lead ensuring that the team’s work and discussion aligned to the protocol for looking at student work. Teachers regularly turn to one another, and the guidance counselor for support and advice on different strategies to try to meet student learning or social emotional needs. However, teachers were not able to speak to specific ways that teachers have a voice in key decisions that affect student learning across the school.

- The school leader shared that there is teacher leadership at the school, in that there are teachers who run the student council, a time when teachers volunteer to, “meet with students to help them become better citizens.” The school leader also shared that teachers will step up and take on additional duties, like taking on leadership roles when there is inclement weather and the principal is out, or take on additional duties, such as supervising students in the cafeteria.