Quality Review Report

2017-2018

P.S. 279 Herman Schreiber
Elementary 18K279
1070 East 104 Street
Brooklyn
NY 11236

Principal: Lorenzo Chambers

Dates of Review:
March 7, 2018 - March 8, 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. 279 Herman Schreiber 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](http://schools.nyc.gov/Accountability/tools/report/default.htm).

School Quality Ratings

### Instructional Core

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>To what extent does the school...</th>
<th>Area</th>
<th>Rating</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<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>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 Celebration</td>
<td>Proficient</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>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>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1.3 Make strategic organizational decisions to support the school’s instructional goals and meet student learning needs, as evidenced by meaningful student work products</td>
<td>Additional Finding</td>
</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>Area of Focus</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

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

Findings

Across the school teachers use rubrics and set criteria to provide students with actionable feedback. Teacher teams use common assessment data to make curricular and instructional modifications on an ongoing basis.

Impact

Students demonstrate use of actionable feedback provided by their teachers, resulting in understanding their progress. Analysis of data from common assessments results in curricular and instructional adjustments that benefit student growth.

Supporting Evidence

- Across classrooms, student work displays and portfolios evidence the use of rubrics, actionable feedback, self- and peer-reflection to improve student learning. For example, in a kindergarten classroom, the task was to create a severe weather alert by identifying two details for each weather alert. The teacher used a four-point rubric and displayed it with the students’ work. Students were able to articulate why they received a score from the rubric. In a fifth-grade classroom, a teacher used a four-point rubric to grade students’ synthesis of a unit on fractions. Students were provided with the rubric level and with actionable feedback containing the language of the rubric such as “Shows excellent understanding of solving a multi-step fraction word problem and written explanation is correct.” The work also evidenced the student’s self-reflection and peer-reflection. Students are able to articulate how teacher feedback has helped them learn and be successful.

- Across classrooms, students receive timely feedback that includes glows and grows and next steps. A fifth-grade student reported that she constantly is assessed using rubrics. For example, she explained that she needed to incorporate more voice in her writing in a previous assignment. The student reported that she expressed herself better about the topic of cyberbullying and that as a result of the teacher’s feedback she received a higher grade in her assignment. Another student reported how the teacher’s use of a post-it color coded system helped him with his benchmark writing assignment. He stated that the teacher writes her feedback on a pink post-it, his own reflection on an orange post-it, and a green post-it is used for peer-reflection. The use of checklists, post-it notes, and age-appropriate rubrics help students and teachers understand students’ strengths, mistakes, and helps them keep track of progress toward achieving grade level standards.

- School leaders report that the use of common assessments and teacher-made assessments have contributed to student growth. For example, through embedded time for collaboration and analysis of data, teachers conduct item analysis and identify next steps or gaps in the curricula. As a result of the analysis of the beginning of the year math assessment teachers realized that adjustments needed to be made to the math-pacing calendar. Their work resulted in moving the topic of fractions to the beginning of the school year and extending it by using other resources and teacher-made lessons. Another example of the use of data from common assessments was adding vocabulary strategies and short response strategies to reading instruction after the fourth-grade baseline reading test. The teachers decided to add lessons to teach the skill of using context clues and the use of the restate, answer, detail one and detail two (RADD) strategy to help students answer selected responses using at least two details. The use of common assessments is used to inform instructional decisions and curricular adjustments at a schoolwide level.
Area of Focus

| Quality Indicator: | 4.2 Teacher Teams and Leadership Development | Rating: | Proficient |

Findings

The majority of teachers are engaged in structured, inquiry-based professional collaborations that promote achievement of school goals and implementation of the Common Core Learning Standards. Teacher teams consistently meet to analyze student performance data and monitor growth toward goals.

Impact

Teacher collaborations result in teacher sharing of best practices, positively impacting their practice and student learning. However, they have yet to result in schoolwide instructional coherence and mastery of goals for groups of students.

Supporting Evidence

- Teacher teams are engaged in a cycle of inquiry-based professional collaborations to analyze work of their students. The fourth-grade team met to discuss on-grade level student’s progress from each class on analyzing character traits. The team reflected on the progress of each student since they last met and collaborated on practices to help them master the Common Core standard of describing characters in depth and drawing details from the text to describe their actions. They administered a formative assessment based on different scenarios listed on a worksheet and discussed the results and instructional practices to employ in the future to achieve better results. The team will be reconvening after they provide the students with a choice of graphic organizers to help them analyze a character in their book. Teachers also discussed teaching strategies such as stop and jot after students read part of the text. One teacher shared a list of annotation marks that all fourth graders would use to highlight the most important details. Other scaffolds, such as the use of glossaries and short-passage multiple-choice practice questions from EngageNY, will be used to achieve the desired student outcomes. Though instructional capacity is strengthened through the work of teacher teams, there is not yet evidence of schoolwide instructional coherence resulting in increased levels of achievement for all learners.

- Teacher teams meet to collaborate and strengthen their instructional capacity by aligning the English Language Arts curriculum to the Common Core. For example, kindergarten teachers met to write a unit on poetry to meet the Common Core standard of recognizing common types of texts. The teachers created a calendar that contains a pre-, formative, and summative assessment. Included in the unit are lessons about recognizing onomatopoeia, alliteration, and rhyme. Another example of team inquiry work is identifying a problem of practice such as conducting mini-lessons in math that align to the school’s new Common Core-aligned math program. The teams will be identifying challenges with the program and have created a calendar for inquiry work and lesson studies. Though there is evidence that teacher teams are conducting inquiry work to strengthen their instructional capacity, and ensure alignment to the Common Core, there is not yet evidence of schoolwide instructional coherence, such as providing students opportunities for math discourse to increase student achievement in math of all learners.

- Data of pre- and post-chapter assessments for math and analysis of reading levels is consistently analyzed by teacher teams to monitor progress of individual students, classes, and groups of students. For example, in math, teachers use a spreadsheet to monitor mastery of Common Core standards by classes. Results of pre- and post-test assessments show growth for all classes. In reading, student in grades three to five demonstrated growth from a baseline assessment given in the beginning of the year to the end-of-unit test. Teacher teams meet to discuss the results of these assessments and plan lessons and interventions to help groups of students move from one level to the next or to increase the percentages of students meeting or exceeding the standard. Though there is evidence of analysis of data by teacher teams to improve teacher practice it has yet to result in mastery of goals for groups of students.
Additional Finding

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

Findings
School leaders and faculty ensure curricula is aligned to the Common Core and integrate the instructional shifts. Rigorous tasks across all subjects and grade levels are planned and refined using data and student work products.

Impact
All students have access to and are cognitively engaged in rigorous tasks that promote college and career readiness.

Supporting Evidence

- Students are cognitively engaged in tasks in reading and writing using ReadyGen and additional lessons that incorporate instructional shifts, such as reading informational texts and writing across subject areas. School leaders report that in grades kindergarten to two, the emphasis is on teaching reading and writing through a balanced literacy model. To ensure coherence of English Language Arts (ELA) across grade levels, teachers have worked with the instructional coach to incorporate interdisciplinary lessons in ELA with an emphasis on the writing process. For example, a grade-four unit goal is for students to compare, gather, and synthesize ideas from multiple sources to respond to a question related to the anchor text and using textual evidence from different informational texts to support their ideas. Teachers and school leaders reported that making adjustments to the curricula is purposeful to help students become better readers and writers using authentic texts. For example, a grade-three writing unit was refined to include lessons that would introduce students to reader’s workshop before launching a unit on summarizing ideas using text and supporting visuals. Curricula is often refined to include the instructional shifts and to build coherence.

- Students are cognitively engaged in tasks in math using a Common Core-aligned program that emphasizes critical-thinking skills and the instructional shifts. Lessons are tailored to all learners to build fluency, perseverance in solving word problems, and mental math. There is a pacing guide for mathematics from kindergarten through fifth grade that clearly indicate target concepts and the amount of time that needs to be spent teaching these concepts. Concepts are introduced in depth so that there is conceptual understanding and opportunities to build fluency as well as coherence. For example, in a unit on fractions in fourth grade, students are taught to multiply a fraction by a whole number and in grade five, students apply this knowledge to multiply fractions and mixed numbers. Curricula is refined to build coherence and integrate the instructional shifts to promote college and career readiness.

- Academic tasks are designed by analyzing student work and using student performance on pre- and post-assessments so that a diversity of learners have access to cognitively engaging tasks. For example, lesson plans evidence support for students with disabilities after analysis of baseline data. In a fourth-grade lesson plan, the teacher planned to keep a list of all unfamiliar words as students with disabilities and English Language Learners (ELLs) read with their definitions and use visuals when they encounter difficulty to support them in making inferences and writing about the struggles of a family moving from one place to another in the winter time. In a fifth-grade math lesson plan, the teacher plans for student choice for all learners and supports for the lowest achieving students. For example, after administering a pre-test a fifth grade teacher’s lesson illustrates the use of manipulatives such as number lines and student choice such as creating a song to teach the rules of rounding numbers. Lessons and curricula are planned so that a diversity of learners have access to engaging tasks.
Findings
Across classrooms, teaching practices reflect a core belief about how students learn best that is aligned to the Danielson Framework for Teaching and instructional shifts. Teachers use technology, charts, and grouping to provide multiple entry points and allow access to the curricula for different types of learners.

Impact
Students are actively engaged in tasks that promote higher-order thinking skills as reflected in student work products and discussions.

Supporting Evidence

- Throughout classrooms students are engaged in individual, partnership, small group, and large group instruction that illustrates the school’s core belief of how students learn best. In a fifth-grade classroom, the learning objective was to classify triangles by the length of the sides and angle measurements. The teacher posted a list of words and had students turn and talk about what the words have in common. Students used respectful language such as “I agree with you but I would like to add on that…” to support their thoughts, leading the students to categorizing triangles. In a kindergarten classroom, the teacher had students reflect on their writing by first modeling the use of a writing checklist using a document camera to show students how to conduct a self-reflection of the how-to book they had written. The students were engaged with partners to self-reflect on their writing using an age-appropriate checklist and to conduct a peer reflection. The teacher circulated and listened in on students’ discussions as she took notes. Throughout classrooms, students are engaged in meaningful discussions about tasks that are aligned to the curricula.

- Throughout classrooms, teachers created opportunities for students to share their thinking. For example, in a second-grade classroom with students with disabilities, the teacher had students watch a video that asked students to find out an easier way to add numbers ten to one. Students turned and talked about the best strategy to mentally solve the problem. She and the paraprofessional then listened to the student discussions. One student shared with another, “I would start with the biggest number.” The teachers provided feedback on what they heard. After a discussion on how difficult it is to use mental math, the students were presented with various illustrations of how to solve the problem and discussed why some methods could be easier. In a fourth-grade science class, the objective was to observe how plants in the Vine Crop system manufacture food that supplies energy. Students worked in groups tasting cucumbers and tomatoes from their hydroponics laboratory and rotated to meet with the teacher to test the PH levels of the water that feed the Vine Crop that produces the best tasting fruits. The students sketched the Vine Crop, labeled the parts, wrote about why the tower is a system, and graded themselves using a rubric. Using a hands-on approach, realia, discussion, and experimenting, all student are engaged with challenging tasks and demonstrate higher-order thinking skills.

- Across classrooms, students are presented with various ways to demonstrate learning and routines that promote student engagement in higher-order thinking tasks. For example, in an integrated co-teaching classroom, students routinely use strategies to help find evidence in the text. Teachers use turn and talk, explicit vocabulary instruction, and the stop and jot strategy to find evidence in the text. The vocabulary is taught in context, students discuss in pairs, and then share out with the group. Using ReadyGen-recommended texts and incorporating interdisciplinary themes such as the study of Native Americans, all students are engaged in rigorous tasks with scaffolds that result in higher-order thinking work products. For example, students wrote about what winter is going to be like for the Omakayas, using inference and details from the text.
## Additional Finding

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Quality Indicator:</th>
<th>3.4 High Expectations</th>
<th>Rating:</th>
<th>Proficient</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>

### Findings

School leaders constantly communicate high expectations to the staff through a staff handbook, classroom observation reports, and professional development. Teachers and staff communicate high expectations to students using rubrics, checklists, and ongoing verbal and written feedback.

### Impact

Teacher feedback toward achieving high expectations helps students prepare for the next level. School leaders provide professional development and hold faculty accountable for expectations.

### Supporting Evidence

- School leaders hold a meeting in the beginning of the school year to communicate high expectations and distribute a staff handbook to use for reference throughout the school year. The handbook contains detailed information on the vision, mission, core values, and policies of the school. The principal's weekly newsletter is sent out every week. Teachers are expected to come to professional learning meetings held every Monday and Tuesday where a variety of topics are covered pertaining to best instructional practices. School leaders report that professional learning is then expected to be implemented in classrooms. Through conferencing with the principal, assistant principal or instructional coach, teachers are held accountable to ensure application of professional learning. For example, in a professional learning conducted by an instructional coach, teachers were introduced to the use of a unit planning checklist. Teachers received professional learning and apply the checklist to their unit planning when they meet as a grade level. A review of units demonstrates that teachers across grades and content areas align learning objectives to the articulated expectations.

- School leaders report that they meet with teachers and focus on the Danielson *Framework for Teaching* to improve questioning and discussion as it applies to math. Teachers were provided with professional development on mathematical classroom discourse so that students talk about and reveal their understanding of mathematical concepts. A protocol for implementing math discourse in classrooms was distributed during the professional learning conference and math talk stems or best mathematical practices are posted across classrooms to guide students to use them to guide their math discussions.

- Teachers meet on a regular basis as a grade level where they select rubrics and checklists for students to use to guide them in their learning and achieve success. For example, in fifth grade, teachers are using a two-point rubric for math constructed responses. Students use the rubric to demonstrate their mathematical thinking and answer short-response questions accurately. In kindergarten, teachers are using a checklist for students to use when writing a how-to book that includes a self-reflection. For example, it asks, “Did I include a picture for each step?” and “Did I use first, next, then, and last?” In second grade students were graded on writing an essay about a person in their life that they admire. Teachers use a rubric that states the Common Core standard and criteria for below, approaching, at and above grade level ratings. Across the school, teachers use grade-levels rubrics to provide accurate feedback and next steps for students with a self-reflection and peer-reflection component to prepare students for the next level.
Additional Finding

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

**Findings**
School leaders support teacher development for all teachers, including those new to the profession, with frequent classroom observation cycles. Prompt written feedback captures teachers' strengths, challenges, and next steps using the Danielson *Framework for Teaching*.

**Impact**
Official and unofficial classroom visits result in written feedback for teachers in observation reports and in emails sent to teachers that make clear the expectations for teacher practice and the supports available to help teachers meet them.

**Supporting Evidence**

- A review of observation reports of teachers reflects frequent cycles of observations with analysis of student work to inform feedback and next steps. For example, in one observation report, the school leader wrote feedback about how the teacher needs to incorporate more supports for students with disabilities in her integrated co-teaching class. The school leader provided the teacher with support by providing her with an article on Specially Designed Instruction (SDI) and with a follow-up date for meeting again to discuss her action plan for implementing SDI in her classroom. The teacher's rating in component 3c, engaging students in learning of the Danielson *Framework for Teaching* was effective. The same teacher was observed again weeks later by a different school leader. The school leader wrote in the observation report that the teacher engaged all students in higher-order thinking tasks by having students take an active role in using manipulatives in a variety of ways in a math lesson about fractions. The teacher’s rating improved in the same component to highly effective. Frequent cycles of observations reflect an improvement of ratings, raising opportunities for student engagement and supporting teacher development.

- As reported by new teachers, school leaders offer ongoing feedback after formal and informal observations. For example, one new teacher reported that a school leader, after visiting the classroom, offered verbal feedback about improving her practice on checking for understanding. The school leader suggested that she visit another teacher that uses a color-coded plastic cup system in her classroom to assess student understanding in real time. The teacher reported that time was arranged for her to visit her colleague and as a result, she is now implementing the strategy of checking for understanding. Teachers, including those new to the profession are provided with effective feedback and next steps to improve their teaching.

- Teachers receive actionable feedback based on the Danielson *Framework for Teaching* such as checking for understanding and engaging students in learning by creating groups. For example, in an observation report, a school leader made suggestions for a teacher to have students explain where they are in the writing process by conferring with them and by taking notes of their progress so that she is capturing student understanding to adjust instruction according to their needs. Another school leader wrote in an observation report that small group instruction as part of the balanced literacy approach to teach reading was not evident during the lesson. The school leader suggested that the teacher familiarize herself with the balanced literacy school program by reading an attached article and working collaboratively with the literacy coach. Teachers are provided with clear expectations, next steps, and support rooted in the Danielson *Framework for Teaching*. 