Quality Review Report

2017-2018

P.S. 163 Alfred E. Smith
Elementary 03M163
163 West 97 Street
Manhattan
NY 10025

Principal: Donny Lopez

Dates of Review:
October 11, 2017 - October 12, 2017

Lead Reviewer: Edward Hazen
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. 163 Alfred E. Smith 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><strong>To what extent does the school...</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1.1 Ensure engaging, rigorous, and coherent curricula in all subjects,</td>
<td>Additional Finding</td>
<td>Well Developed</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>accessible for a variety of learners and aligned to Common Core Learning Standards</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>and/or content standards</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1.2 Develop teacher pedagogy from a coherent set of beliefs about how students</td>
<td>Additional Finding</td>
<td>Proficient</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>learn best that is informed by the instructional shifts and Danielson Framework</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>for Teaching, aligned to the curricula, engaging, and meets the needs of all</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>learners so that all students produce meaningful work products</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2.2 Align assessments to curricula, use on-going assessment and grading practices,</td>
<td>Additional Finding</td>
<td>Proficient</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>and analyze information on student learning outcomes to adjust instructional</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>decisions at the team and classroom levels</td>
<td></td>
<td></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>Area of Focus</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>Area of Celebration</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>
Findings
School leaders support the professional growth of teachers using cycles of observations. Feedback addresses strengths and challenges while including next steps for improvement.

Impact
School leaders have an effective system to observe teachers and support their practice through follow-up professional learning opportunities, resulting in the adoption of common instructional practices that promote professional growth and reflection.

Supporting Evidence

- The school leadership team has an effective observation cycle in place to support the professional development of teachers and provide actionable feedback on instructional practices. Additionally, the school participates in the Learning Partners Program (LPP) in which the school partners with other schools to share best instructional practices through informal peer to peer classroom observations and collegial feedback. Teachers report that participation in the LPP program, along with meaningful feedback on formal observation by school leaders, has strengthened their pedagogical practices in domain three of the Danielson Framework for Teaching. This is reflected in Advance data ratings from the 2016-2017 school year in which the school scored higher than the citywide average in all three subcomponents of this domain which focuses solely on classroom instruction, an indication that the school leaders' observation cycle is having a positive impact on classroom instruction.

- The school's instructional goals are clearly articulated in the school's Comprehensive Education Plan (CEP) and shared with staff at the beginning of the school year. These include using high leverage instructional practices to ensure that all students, including English Language Learners (ELLs) and students with disabilities, make a full year's worth of growth on their running record assessments. Additionally, LPP members have identified schoolwide best practices which are communicated regularly to school leaders to support the planning of professional learning cycles for staff. These include the use of questioning techniques and scaffolds to provide multiple entry points into the lessons. Trends and patterns in instruction are also shared with teachers each Friday during professional collaboration time. In addition, the principal sends out the Weekly Informer, a weekly email each Sunday to faculty highlighting the instructional foci and related activities for the upcoming week. For example, teachers were reminded to review a list of “best schoolwide practices of 163.” Post-observation as well as informal coaching conversations serve as regular reminders to teachers of schoolwide expectations for pedagogy. A review of teacher observation feedback indicates comments to teachers that clearly articulate next steps for improvement and identify supports to improve their practice. For example, the next steps from an observation of a math lesson were the inclusion of scaffolds such as manipulatives and a part-part-total organizer to support student mastery of the learning objective.

- School leaders have established professional learning cycles which serve to support teachers in meeting the articulated instructional foci of the school. Within each cycle, teachers, in conjunction with teacher leaders and LPP representatives, identify specific learning objectives that will strengthen their ability to engage students in the close analysis of text, promote high levels of student discourse, and have students write purposefully across grades and content areas. School leaders actively engage teachers in team work to analyze trends in instruction, student achievement data, and student work products to inform changes to pedagogy that are required in order to achieve the schoolwide goals. For instance, to foster close textual analysis and interdisciplinary writing, teachers adopted the RATE strategy across grades and disciplines, which requires students to restate the question, answer the question, use text-based evidence, and explain the evidence (RATE).
Area of Focus

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

Findings

The school leaders use traditional means as well as multimedia platforms to consistently communicate high expectations to staff, and staff provides feedback to parents on their children’s academic progress.

Impact

Systems of accountability for staff and communication with families ensure that the students and their parents are aware of the progress toward college and career readiness.

Supporting Evidence

- The school’s leadership team is committed to communicating high expectations to the faculty and holding them accountable while providing the ongoing support that is required to meet those expectations and improve their professional practice. Instructional expectations have been articulated to teachers via the school’s CEP, professional learning sessions, teacher team meetings, and the Weekly Informer. Members from the school leadership team provide teachers with support in advancing their professional growth and aligning their instructional strategies and curricula to the schoolwide goals and the Common Core Learning Standards through professional learning sessions that occur a minimum of once per week. A review of the Professional Development Plan and sign in sheets indicates that professional learning sessions to differentiate the math curricula and implement student collaborative conversations have occurred. The school has an initiative in place which requires the implementation of rigorous curriculum, instruction, and academic tasks as well as ongoing student assessment through the use of running records. Teachers reported that most of the professional learning sessions focused on implementing instructional practices to build academic language and analysis of student data and work products to support teachers in having all students meet the demands of the Common Core.

- Teachers are held accountable to the schoolwide expectations through formal classroom observations by school leaders and by participating in informal observations with their colleagues. In the latter case, teachers observe each other and provide actionable feedback to further their professional practice through follow-up collegial conversations. Teachers reported that they have had several opportunities for intervisitation, observing colleagues using specific instructional strategies such as conversation starters and questioning techniques that they can use in their own classrooms. Teachers stated that this practice has improved their pedagogy, which was supported by Advance teacher evaluation ratings, revealing that seventy-six percent of teachers were rated highly effective and forty percent rated effective in the 2016-2017 school year.

- School leaders have systems and structures to communicate high expectations to families that lead to college and career readiness for their children. Parents report receiving regular communications from the school, including information on the Common Core and college and career readiness, through a variety of means: PTA meetings; backpack notifications; multimedia platforms; and online software. Parents stated that they frequently visit the school website for information on school activities and events or to review procedures and policies. Parents further noted that they are aware of the academic and behavioral expectations for their children and are kept up to date on their children’s progress through report cards, parent conferences, contacts with teachers via emails and texts, and online software available to parents that tracks attendance and behavior in real time. While parents were appreciative of having several modes in which to communicate with the school, they suggested that it may be helpful to identify the most efficient means to communicate with families to create a uniform system.
**Additional Finding**

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

**Findings**

Curricula are aligned to the Common Core Learning Standards, and instructional shifts are strategically integrated. Curricula and academic tasks are purposefully refined to emphasize rigorous habits and academic tasks that are accessible to all learners.

**Impact**

There is curricular coherence across grades and subject areas that promotes high levels of student thinking and college and career readiness. Faculty routinely plan and refine curricula to ensure multiple entry points for a variety of learners so that all students are cognitively engaged and able to demonstrate rigorous habits and thinking in academic tasks.

**Supporting Evidence**

- School leaders and teachers ensure that the curricula are aligned to the Common Core and the school’s instructional foci by providing multiple opportunities for students to engage in meaningful higher-order discussions and the writing process. Teachers strategically integrate cognitively challenging questions, discussion starters, and problem-solving tasks into curriculum maps and lesson plans. For example, in grades pre-kindergarten through grade five, lesson plans and curricula identify common conversation practices that teachers utilize to foster high levels of student engagement, such as open discussion circles, carousel protocols, and Socratic Seminars. Furthermore, to build coherence across grade levels and content areas, teachers use common strategies and protocols in their curriculum maps and lesson plans to encourage high levels of student discourse, such as the Collaborative Conversations Rubric that measures levels of participation in real time. Similarly, the use of student-facing checklists for writing results ensures consistency in the writing process across disciplines and requires student self-reflection.

- Higher order thinking skills and rigorous habits are promoted across grade levels and disciplines for all students through the implementation of schoolwide practices that are embedded into the curricula and meet the rigors of the Common Core. For example, in addition to using the RATE writing strategy across classrooms and content areas, teachers also require students to use COPS to ensure writing includes accurate capitalization, organizing paragraphs, details, supporting evidence and concluding sentences for informational and opinion writing; correct punctuation; and accurate spelling (COPS). In math, teachers universally have students use parentheses, exponents, Multiplication/division, addition/subtraction (PEMDAS) as a means for following an order of operations to evaluate equations. As a result, there is coherence in having all students demonstrate their thinking across grades and subjects.

- Teachers meet weekly to work collaboratively using a Looking At Student Work (LASW) protocol to assess the quality of student work products and analyze trends in common assessment data, making revisions to curricula, lesson plans, and pacing guides and determining student groups so that the needs of all students are being met. Groups are organized by ability based on whether they are below grade level, approaching or on grade level, or above grade level and color coded for easy identification of students’ abilities so that teachers can efficiently plan for supports such as scaffolds and extension activities, as necessary. Similarly, targeted small group instruction is planned for ELLs and students with disabilities using this format. Likewise, entry points into lessons and student supports for challenging academic tasks are provided through schoolwide norms and protocols such as the Collaborative Conversation student routines, checklist and rubric; use of RATE, COPS, and PEMDAS strategies; and the use of scaffolds such as annotation methodologies, brainstorm graphic organizers, accountable talk prompts, and discussion stems.
Additional Finding

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Quality Indicator:</th>
<th>1.2 Pedagogy</th>
<th>Rating:</th>
<th>Proficient</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>

Findings

Teaching strategies align to schoolwide goals and provide entry points through the use of leveled grouping and scaffolds so that all learners can participate in high level academic tasks.

Impact

Students engage in high levels of thinking and discussion leading to the development of meaningful work products across classrooms. However, these practices are not yet fully implemented in the vast majority of classes.

Supporting Evidence

- Across classrooms, teaching practices are aligned to the school’s articulated set of beliefs about how students learn best. One of the overarching schoolwide beliefs is that the pedagogy must engage students in purposeful reading and writing, emphasizing high level academic tasks and discussions to promote college and career ready skills. School leaders and teachers identified the Teachers College Reading and Writing Program (TCWRP) workshop model as the best way to align instructional practices to the schoolwide goal. The workshop model was observed being utilized across classrooms and grade levels. Most students were observed participating in group and partner discussions utilizing “Collaborative Conversations Rubrics” to keep them engaged in purposeful conversations. Similarly, in both a social studies and a science class, students and teachers were observed sitting in conversation circles using silent hand gesture protocols to keep each other focused on the discussion and keep it moving around the circle.

- In most classrooms, lesson plans and supporting teaching materials represent a knowledge and understanding of students’ diverse needs, resulting in academic tasks and activities that engage students in high levels of cognitive activity. Most lessons include academic tasks and supports such as scaffolds and generate challenging discourse to intellectually engage all students, including students with disabilities, struggling students, and the highest achieving students. In a second grade Integrated Co-Teaching (ICT) classroom, students were required to use close reading and text-based evidence to locate key information from informational texts about shearing sheep. Students were shown a short video explaining the process of sheep shearing prior to transitioning into collaborative groups. Teachers grouped the students by reading ability and provided them with leveled texts and differentiated tasks. Students were given scaffolds such as accountable talk prompts and question “sticks” or starters. The teacher visited each group to monitor the level of student discussion using a Collaborative Conversation Checklist. Consequently, the use of multiple entry points ensured that all students were engaged in challenging tasks requiring higher order thinking.

- In a fifth grade English Language Arts (ELA) class, the teacher used purposeful grouping to prompt students to work collaboratively to determine the theme of a story, using details from the text to support their responses. Prior to starting the group work, the teacher modeled how to determine which evidence would support an exemplary answer of how an author’s choice of words builds the theme of the story. Students were given a team task which required answering an inference question from the text, such as, “Why is Ben worried about Mrs. Tibbets?” and had to use text-based evidence to support their answers. Students were provided with chart paper to record their responses so they could share their work products with the rest of the class. The teacher visited each group to monitor the level of student participation and discussion using a student conversation checklist while groups were required to self-monitor their levels of discourse using a collaborative discussion rubric.
Additional Finding

### Quality Indicator: 2.2 Assessment

#### Rating: Proficient

**Findings**

Across classrooms, teachers use rubrics aligned to the Common Core Learning Standards and school curricula. Across grades and subject areas, the school uses common assessments to determine student progress towards goals.

**Impact**

Teachers analyze student assessment data to provide actionable feedback to students and teacher teams regarding student achievement levels. Across grades and subjects, assessment results are used to adjust curriculum and instruction.

**Supporting Evidence**

- Teachers use common rubrics and assessments across grade levels that align to the school's curricula and have adopted a schoolwide policy of using TCRWP running records and student checklists to monitor student progress. A review of student work samples indicated that most teachers provided students with actionable feedback and next steps for improvement. For example, many teachers cite an area in which each student met or exceeded the criteria for proficiency on the TCWRP writing rubric (a glow) and an area in which he or she needs to improve, including next steps (a grow). While most students indicated that they valued the feedback and that it helped them focus on the next steps to improve their work, they also noted that the quality of the feedback varied by content area. Similarly, while most of the student writing samples examined across content areas had concise next steps, such as “we will work on expanding your idea in the conclusion by possibly including details about the lesson of the story,” some feedback statements on math work was limited to “remember to show your work” or “you forgot to expand your answer.”

- In kindergarten through fifth grade, teachers use common assessments to identify students’ strengths and weakness, plan small group instruction and interventions, and identify reading and writing goals for students. Data is then used to identify students who are not progressing and to determine appropriate interventions that will get them back on track. The school’s data analyst specialist supports teacher teams by analyzing classroom data to determine which instructional practices are most effective in improving student achievement. The school’s data coach and lead teachers work collaboratively with individual classroom teachers, cluster teachers, teacher teams, and intervention specialists to review data collected from various ELA assessments, including TCRWP running records and teacher-created, on-demand writing assessments, to make adjustments to curricula, pacing guides, and lesson plans. In one class, teachers were observed assessing the level of student discourse using the schoolwide Collaborative Conversations Whole Class Checklist. Assessment data is then used to determine next steps to improving student engagement in cognitively challenging conversations.

- Prior to starting a new writing unit, teachers administer a pre-assessment to determine students' current abilities in order to create leveled groups to differentiate instruction. Subsequently, a unit post-assessment is used to determine if students need to be re-grouped. Common Beginning of the Year (BOY) and End of the Year (EOY) assessments are administered to determine if students are meeting the expected outcomes for each grade level. Analyzed assessment data are then used to adjust curricula and instruction. A first grade teacher team was observed using a “looking at student work” protocol to analyze students’ constructed responses on the common grade level assessment, identifying trends in strengths and challenges and next steps for improvement.
Additional Finding

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Quality Indicator:</th>
<th>4.2 Teacher Teams and Leadership Development</th>
<th>Rating:</th>
<th>Well Developed</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>

Findings
The vast majority of teachers are engaged in structured, inquiry-based collaborations that align to the school goals and promote professional growth and improvement in student achievement.

Impact
The increased instructional capacity resulting from teacher team inquiry has strengthened and improved teachers' pedagogy, positively affecting student learning across grades and content areas, and increasing the number of students meeting or exceeding mastery on common grade level assessments.

Supporting Evidence

- The vast majority of teachers are engaged in inquiry-based professional collaborations to ensure the implementation of the Common Core across grade levels and content areas. The work products generated by the collaborative teacher teams such as lesson plans, unit plans, and student materials are shared at grade level meetings and posted in the school's shared drive to allow access to the documents by all staff members. An Integrated Co-Teacher (ICT) reported that this process makes both co-planning with teachers and planning for the students she supports easier because she has access to all of the curricula for the classes with which she works. She further noted that the grade level meeting time allowed her and her colleagues to turn the Common Core into “I Can” statements that are used as lesson objectives and Individualized Education Plan (IEP) goals for her students. Teachers overwhelmingly agreed that the teacher team collaboration and professional learning time have improved their professional practice as well as students' achievement, as evidenced by an increase in the number of students performing at or above grade level on TCRWP assessments from 78 percent in fall 2016 to 83 percent in spring 2017.

- Teachers meet in grade level teams and vertical grade band teams comprised of primary teachers (pre-kindergarten through second grade) and upper elementary teachers (third through fifth grade). A review of agendas and meeting minutes indicates that teachers use this time to align curricula to the Common Core and to analyze trends in student achievement data and student work products to inform changes to curricula and instructional practice. For example, teachers aligned the ReadyGen curriculum with the TCRWP to ensure alignment to the Common Core English Language Arts standards. Teachers also use their planning time to analyze student writing samples to make adjustments to the scope and sequence of the writing portion of the TCRWP and place students in leveled groups.

- Teacher teams use a Looking At Student Work protocol to examine student work samples to ensure that there is alignment to the Common Core, the instructional shifts, and the school’s instructional foci. During a first grade team meeting, teachers were observed using a “what do you notice, what do you wonder” protocol to examine students’ constructed responses on a common grade level assessment. Teachers noticed that a student with a disability demonstrated phonemic awareness and sight word ability, but was lacking detail and complexity in writing the personal narrative. They decided to continue to encourage the student to use the classroom word wall as a means to expand his use of academic language and to have him practice his sight words as an additional reinforcement activity.