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

Neighborhood School 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><strong>To what extent does the school...</strong></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>Well Developed</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>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>Additional Finding</td>
<td>Proficient</td>
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</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>
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</tbody>
</table>

## Systems for Improvement

To what extent does the school...

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Area</th>
<th>Rating</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1.3 Make strategic organizational decisions to support the schools 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
The school leader strategically uses frequent observations and opportunities for peer intervistation, with a focus on new teachers, to support teacher development. Feedback to teachers accurately captures strengths, challenges, and next steps.

Impact
The feedback to teachers articulates clear expectations, is connected to the school community’s shared progressive beliefs, and includes supports that promote professional growth and reflection.

Supporting Evidence

- As a part of the City’s Progressive Redesign Opportunity Schools for Excellence (PROSE) program, the school’s approach to teacher support and supervision includes frequent cycles of observation and analysis of student work and data by the school leader and teacher peers. The school does not use the Advance system, observations are conducted a few times a month for each teacher, by the school leader, or a teacher peer, or monthly for teachers who have been rated highly effective. At the time of the review, all teachers were observed at least twice, many three times, by the school leader, or by peers. As an outgrowth of this process, teachers are paired together strategically based on their strengths and goals for the year, or for those who are new to the profession they are paired with veteran teachers who provide additional support. At a question and answer session, teachers overwhelmingly agreed that their observations are helpful. One teacher shared that she is being mentored by a veteran teacher, has frequent opportunities to be observed and receive feedback, and also to visit her mentor who teaches an upper grade class. The teacher shared that, aligned with her goals, this is helping her to better understand pedagogical strategies and child development.

- After observations are conducted, a conversation occurs around low inference observation notes and student work from the class. The observer also comes prepared with thoughts and questions, and teachers use a common template for their own reflection. Together, they decide on next steps. One teacher shared that next steps are always clear and concrete, whether provided by the school leader or a peer. Another teacher observed by the school leader, shared that feedback included strengths, acknowledged ongoing challenges, questions for the teacher to ponder, and next steps connected to the teacher and the school’s expectations around behavior, as well as suggested professional learning to support the teacher in meeting the next steps. Questions given to the teacher were, “Are there other ways to manage centers? Can students work in the centers for the entire time and then rotate the next day? It seemed that they were just getting into the flow of the work and then they switched.” The school leader and teacher then created a new lesson plan that allowed for more time for students at each center, articulating clear next steps and support in creating new plans. Teachers shared that the school leader, or a peer observer often takes the time to plan next steps alongside the teacher after an observation.

- School records and conversations with teachers demonstrate that observations often connect to teachers’ professional goals. The post-observation template that teachers use for reflection begins with their goals, that for one teacher included getting students to listen to one another and engaging students at different levels of mixed ages or ability levels. Thus the feedback provided highlighted ways that the teacher provides more than one entry point for the learning objective, clear next steps aligned with the school’s expectations for creating student choice and independence, and engaging students in conversation with one another. Thus in alignment with the pre-established goals.
Area of Focus

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

Findings

Teaching strategies promote student-to-student discussions, high levels of thinking, and provide scaffolded entry points for a variety of learners.

Impact

While there is not yet student ownership in the vast majority of classrooms, students across classes are engaged in challenging tasks and participate in discussions that reflect high levels of thinking and participation.

Supporting Evidence

- Across classes, teaching strategies that scaffold tasks to support student thinking provide access for all students, including those with disabilities and English Language Learners (ELLs), via anchor charts and models, entrée into the thinking of a partner, teacher provided guiding questions, manipulatives, and purposeful attention to strategies for students to use in support of their learning. In a mixed grade level class for pre-kindergarten and kindergarten students, students engaged in “work-time”, a time set aside during the day across the grades for students to have a choice of engaging in an independent or collaborative project, or engage in self-directed work. Some students chose to explore the life of worms in the class compost, others enjoyed block play or make believe, some wrote letters and addressed envelopes to a class or a schoolmate using models, and a few worked on an independent sewing project. In support of the work there were guiding questions from the teachers for students working on independent projects, such as, “Why did you decide to use this material?” and, “What is the next step?” Vocabulary and student work connected to the stations were posted at student eye level around the room. Not all students have this much autonomy and closely matched scaffolding across the vast majority of classrooms.

- In an upper grade social studies class for fourth and fifth graders, students worked with a partner to read differentiated texts about the sugar and the transatlantic slave trade. The students were given table tents with directions that helped them to work independently and take ownership of the task. An anchor chart and a matching graphic organizer was provided to help students pull facts from the texts that they read together. The graphic organizer asked students to write together, providing rich student-to-student discussions, and provided space for two students to work together and cite evidence from their texts. While this level of collaboration and ownership was seen in a few other classes, it is not yet present in the vast majority.

- In a few classes, there were missed opportunities to provide purposeful extensions to the learning activities to appropriately challenge a few of the class’ students. In two math classes visited, students worked with manipulatives, such as white boards, math bracelets with different color beads, numbered cards, math counters, and access to the thinking of their peers. In one, a few students finished their task with ease, and without extension, leaving them to wait for their peers to finish before moving on to the next station or more challenging problems. In a literacy class focused on phonics and spelling, students engaged in differentiated group tasks, some with autonomy from the teacher, some without. A few students finished early and a teacher attempted to extend the learning with dictionary work, but students searched for words without the same purpose as the lesson objective and other planned activities. For other students in the same class, an extension provided students with more complex words to work with in thinking about spelling and suffixes, leading to extensions of mixed quality for students.
Additional Finding

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

Findings

The school staff strategically embeds literacy instruction through social studies, in school created curricula aligned to the Common Core. Rigorous habits and higher order skills, especially real world problem solving, is emphasized and embedded to promote coherence across grades and subjects.

Impact

Coherence of planned instruction promotes student-directed inquiry and lifelong learning for all students.

Supporting Evidence

- The school leaders and faculty have created a schoolwide set of activities and expectations for students, pre-kindergarten through grade five, for literacy (reading and writing), social studies, math, science, Spanish, library, homework, and other skills that appears in formal documentation. This includes developing fine and gross motor skills, handwriting, taking turns, managing themselves and others, and skills for independent and collaborative projects, such as taking care of materials, following routines and directions, and sticking with an idea over time. The guiding curricular documents result in coherence and flexibility in mixed-age classrooms, common across the school, and embeds the Common Core standards around what students should know and are able to do. The documents, shared with all staff online, also contain links to student self-reflection tools, rubrics, and templates, such as a historical fiction writing template for fifth graders that asks students to select domain-specific vocabulary that they will use to cite sources when planning their narrative. Tasks such as these, embedded in a coherent way across the grades and subjects, ensure that all learners, including students with disabilities and English Language Learners must demonstrate their thinking.

- School leaders and faculty have created the school’s social studies curriculum, which serves as the backbone of the school’s broader curricula, and embeds opportunities for skill-building in reading, writing, science, and hands on learning such as involving the arts. Thematic units are planned using the Common Core Standards for literacy so that there is a focus on students speaking, writing, and creating with text or experience-based sources. One unit shared, built around student understanding of their community through the work of the post office, plans for students to read fiction and non-fiction texts about communities, as well as non-fiction articles and texts about the post office and mail. The unit activities include these shared readings, conducting interviews, field trips around the community and the post office, and students themselves creating a schoolwide post office that students and staff use to write and share mail with one another. Other skills, such as creating community and school maps, making predictions and conducting experiments, designing stamps, taking on jobs, and reflecting on experiences are also included in the unit. Thus, this unit, similar to others throughout the grades, strategically integrates the instructional shifts, and ensures that students develop rigorous habits and higher order skills as they develop first-hand knowledge about the community of which they are a part, with an eye toward careers.

- Lesson plans shared during the review purposefully align to one to two Common Core Learning Standards. A math lesson plan, typical of others shared, focused on fluency with accuracy and speed of simple calculations, as well as opportunities for students to talk aloud and share their math thinking through games. The plan called for students to either take turns playing a card game to make ten, use math manipulative bracelets to make ten, or write equations using ten, ensuring that a variety of learners have access and are able to demonstrate their thinking.
Additional Finding

**Quality Indicator:** 2.2 Assessment  
**Rating:** Proficient

**Findings**

Teachers use assessments across the grades and subjects, including holistic, criteria-based observations, and build opportunities to assess students’ understanding into their lessons.

**Impact**

The analysis of assessments leads to adjustments in curricula to meet all students' learning needs.

**Supporting Evidence**

- Teachers use spreadsheets to track reading progress from fall, winter, and spring reading assessments with the addition of monthly notations of student progress toward goals across the grades. They include next steps for individual students, such as sight word work, reading comprehension levels, or “needs to use a chart to retell a story in order.” These teacher created spreadsheets also reveal whole class planning that includes such things as reading centers with a focus, guided reading protocols, listening centers, specific strategies as making consonant-vowel-consonant words or retelling a story with a script, and leveled reading practice for groups of students at the same reading level. Other adjustments, such as creating class-made booklets to build students’ ability to match pictures and text, or the addition of new learning objectives to work on emergent literacy skills such as alphabet matching or other developing language skills were also noted. In math, teacher create similar spreadsheets to note individual student progress toward goals, and to group students informed by common baseline and mid-module assessments. In other subjects, in several classrooms, teachers shared that the ways they group their students is flexible, depending on the lesson, assessment data, and observations about student strengths. Consequently, spreadsheets used across the grades are consistent in demonstrating how teachers use common leveled assessments to make adjustments to curricula and instruction.

- Across subject areas, teachers use a common assessment technique of observing students and noting anecdotal evidence of what individual students are capable of relative to a given continuum. In social studies, science, and for writing and reading tasks, teachers observe and note whether students are progressing, on target, have strengths, or are not yet progressing in defined tasks, such as demonstrating critical thinking during reading, choosing and developing topics in writing on their own, or incorporating knowledge of genre and audience in their writing or discussions. In math, teachers measure progress toward goals through observation of what students know and are able to do, such as using different strategies to problem solve with flexibility and accurately complete multi-digit adding, subtraction, multiplication and division. While anecdotal note-taking differs in some classes, the criteria, content, and skills are common across classrooms that teachers and paraprofessionals look for as they observe what students can do while learning, and in what skills they are not yet proficient. Across classrooms, teachers use this observation technique and the shared continuum of knowledge and skills as a common assessment, and use the information to make adjustments to lesson plans and units.

- Across classrooms, teachers consistently check for understanding through questioning, listening and watching students work. In many classes, teachers and paraprofessionals recorded student thinking, as was seen in a classroom for four and five year olds. The teacher and paraprofessionals took notes on students initiating play, problem solving, and observing worms in compost in learning centers, and then adjusted their questions, rewriting or adding their lesson plan. Similarly, in a math class, teachers asked questions such as, “If I move the beads here, how many will I have?” as a check for understanding, and added additional problems for some groups, or reminded students of anchor charts so they could self-assess, making effective adjustments to meet student learning needs.
Findings

The school leader, teachers, and parents act as partners, and staff communicate effectively and regularly about professional expectations, as well as what students need to prepare for college and career.

Impact

There is mutually accountability for ensuring that the school staff uphold their shared commitment to progressive education. The school staff supports families in understanding expectations and their children’s progress through morning meetings, letters from staff, and the creation of detailed narratives.

Supporting Evidence

- The school leader and teachers share a commitment to progressive education and ensuring that students learn through first-hand experiences with people, materials and places. Daily morning meetings, weekly memos, and professional learning led by teachers, the principal, or consultants, provide teachers with training to meet expectations. Monthly descriptive inquiry is at the heart of the school's professional learning, and focuses on providing time for teachers or the school leader to present a focus question to their colleagues, such as curriculum-building, lesson planning, decision-making, and/or supporting learners. The staff listens and responds with questions and ideas to support the presenter. Teachers also set and hold others accountable for expectations for teacher work, including instruction, assessment, and curricular development.

- The school leader hosts a monthly morning hour of learning and discussion for families about the school’s progressive approach that encompasses mixed-age classrooms, meaningful homework, and the school's holistic approach to education that equally values academics, social-emotional learning, and ensuring that students see themselves as agents of social justice in their community. Parents at a question and answer session shared that in addition to these informative morning sessions, teachers help to make curricular expectations clear through weekly letters that are sent home, and curriculum nights where they learn about the literacy and math curricula, the school's approach to student assessment, and preparing for middle school. One letter shared, sent home by a first and second grade teacher, described the successes and challenges of students mid-way through a unit where students researched and opened a yoga studio in the school. Parents also shared that they have ongoing and regular communication with teachers in person and by phone and that email helps to ensure that they understand their children's progress toward expectations.

- The school does not assign students grades or use a traditional report card. Instead, teachers produce lengthy mid-year and end-of-year narrative reports that describe in detail the child’s life at school, and also includes checklists that make clear each student’s needs, progress, and strengths in social emotional learning, work habits, literacy, social studies, science, math, and project time. One mid-year narrative shared via six pages, both in English and Spanish versions, a child’s transition into the fourth and fifth-grade class, the Common Core-aligned skills the student worked on, such as inferencing, writing from sources or using math models to problem solve, and how the student is doing in each of the content areas, often including quotes of student self-reflection. During the meeting with parents, there was unanimous praise for teachers, and the time and attention given to each child that is demonstrated through these narratives. One parent described the work of staff as “an act of devotion to children, their strengths and where they are in life, the classroom and the curricula.” Several parents shared that the narratives are the first time that they felt that someone was accurately able to describe their child, and that this deep knowledge has allowed them to support their children in making progress.
Findings

Teachers engage in curricular inquiry and look at student work to build the school curricula. Distributive leadership structures are in place.

Impact

Teachers have a voice in decisions that have an impact on teacher practices and student performance.

Supporting Evidence

- The majority of teachers are engaged in structured, team-based inquiry collaborations focused on curricular work. During the review, the first and second grade team met around a shared problem of practice from a recently given common assessment, improving reading comprehension for students who decoded at grade level but were missing comprehension strategies. Teachers reviewed running records of student reading levels and habits, and anecdotal notes of student reading performance. From this discussion of the assessments and notes on student reading work teachers then planned for future lessons, sharing strategies with one another, such as focusing students on patterns in words, sight word practice and word games, and purposefully using a sticky note to prompt students to retell smaller chunks of the story at a time. Teachers took note of student progress across the assessments, and of planned next steps, demonstrating collaboration connected to the school’s instructional goals that results in progress toward goals for groups of students.

- At the end of the meeting, the teachers set the agenda for the next meeting, and teachers shared that this agenda was created at the last meeting, as they had just finished a common reading assessment and wanted to put changes into their unit and lesson plans in response to student learning need. The created agenda for the following week was similar, in that they would follow up on the new strategies put in place at this meeting, and then do similar work of reviewing student progress and planning curricular adaptations for their social studies unit, demonstrating a spiraling, structured inquiry-based professional collaboration.

- In a separate question and answer session, teachers from different grades shared different ways that they are able to have a key voice in making decisions that affect student learning across the school. Teachers shared that they take the lead from students and their interests and academic needs when creating units and projects, and that they have a lot of decision-making ability and autonomy in shaping the curricula. Teachers also noted that they rotate the responsibility of chairing monthly inquiry meetings and that taking the lead for a month at a time allowed them to get things on the agenda, and contribute to a sense of fairness in the adult work of the school.

- Teachers shared that all staff take on responsibilities in their school that has only one administrator. A structure of staff jobs allows for teachers to have opportunities to take on leadership roles of their choosing, such as creating the school schedule, mentoring new teachers, and also chairing committees, such as the staff retreat committee, or the school’s diversity committee, made up of staff and families. Teachers also shared that major instructional decisions, such as which grades to put together in a classroom, such as fourth and fifth graders together, third graders on their own, or which running record assessments to use, are made as a staff through a democratic voting process.