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. 186 Castlewood 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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<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>Area of Focus</td>
<td>Proficient</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1.2 Develop teacher pedagogy from a coherent set of beliefs about how students learn best that is informed by the instructional shifts and Danielson Framework for Teaching, aligned to the curricula, engaging, and meets the needs of all learners so that all students produce meaningful work products</td>
<td>Area of Celebration</td>
<td>Well Developed</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>Well Developed</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
## School Culture

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

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Area</th>
<th>Rating</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1.4 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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<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>
Findings

Across the vast majority of classrooms, teaching practices reflect a coherent set of beliefs about how students learn best, most notably student to student discussion.

Impact

All students work products reflect high levels of rigor, thinking, participation and ownership through student-centered approaches, especially discussion.

Supporting Evidence

- School team records reflect a shared belief system in the school that students learn best when they have frequent opportunities to engage in student-to-student dialogue. All classes visited allowed students generous opportunities to engage in student-centered lessons that allowed for plenty of student discussions. For example, during a second-grade reading class, students engaged in group discussions to predict what they thought the character of the book, Jack will do next. Students shared the following, “I believe that Jack will follow the horses” and “I think he will try and get Dusty back with his mom.” This example of student-to-student dialogue was common across classrooms. Similarly, in a math lesson, students displayed ownership and ran the lesson themselves about problem solving money. Students engaged in discussions with one another about budgeting their money and purchasing a specific amount of school supplies while not going over the budgeted amount. Students were heard agreeing, disagreeing and offering solutions in order to remain on budget and not exceeding the given amount reflecting high levels of student thinking, participation and ownership.

- Student work products reviewed throughout the school evidenced rigor, high levels of thinking and participation. One student created a water cycle project using a large cardboard box and adding labeled diagrams and index cards detailing the names of each cycle such as evaporation and precipitation. The student also constructed diagrams of the sun, clouds and ground formations to help illustrate the process. A pair of students created their own sea animal and were able to explain the animal's physical attributes, such as poisonous slime and spikes to help it survive, gills so it can breathe and flippers to help it swim. The students also shared whether the new animal they created was a predator or prey and provided a rationale and specifics. This was a clear example of student ownership, as the students constructed the animal, named it, described it, explained its physical features and presented their project in a clear coherent manner.

- Across classrooms, lessons were aligned to units of study. The use of academic vocabulary in English Language Arts (ELA), and fluency in math were evident and students were asked to cite evidence from text and explain their thinking in multiple ways in math, evidence of the instructional shifts. There is also a belief that student learn best when they are left on their own to work independently or in groups, Students had opportunities to engage in discussion with peers through purposeful and flexible groupings inclusive of small group work and discussion circles, as teachers simply circulate and listened in, acting only as a facilitator.
## Area of Focus

<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 teachers ensure that curricula are aligned to the Common Core Learning Standards and integrate the instructional shifts. Rigor for all students, through the use of rigor indicators, is emphasized across many, but not the vast majority of planning documents.

### Impact

There is curricular coherence across many but not all planning documents that promotes college and career readiness for all students. Access to the curricula for all students was seen throughout some, but not all planning documents.

### Supporting Evidence

- In order to establish coherence with respect to rigor, the teachers have implemented rigor indicators into their planning documents in order to clearly identify the ways that rigor will take place during their lesson. For example, a fifth-grade math lesson identified several rigor indicators that included, students being aware of their learning, all tasks will require content knowledge and skills to be applied to realistic problem solving scenarios and students creating and presenting authentic questions that push the level of rigor. Planning for a fourth-grade science lesson plan included rigor indicators to ensure that there are meaningful student choices and tasks that result in the creation of authentic student work products. However, not all planning documents and lesson plans included rigor indicators that guide the lesson towards high levels of rigor.

- Rigor for all students was seen across most, but not all planning documents. Using the rigor indicators as a foundation, planning documents evidenced ways that all students engage in rigorous activities. For example, a second-grade math lesson plan had students solving word problems using dollar bills, quarters, dimes, nickels, and pennies. Students work in predetermined groups based on skill in order for students to work together and support each other. The lesson plan for the school’s genius hour period, included planning for students to engage in a Socratic Seminar that offered students that need assistance, accountable talk stems and sentence starters in order to be able to successfully participate. However, not all planning documents detailed the ways that students that need additional assistance would have access to the curricula.

- The school has been a Teachers College Reading and Writing Project school for several years. School leaders and teachers work closely with staff developers to align the units of study to the standards. In addition, math documents also evidenced alignment to Common Core and the instructional shifts. For example, a first-grade math lesson plan included the ways students will create and solve addition and subtraction equations with multiples added by using strategies of their choice. A fifth-grade math lesson plan included a component to allow students to multiply by adding decimals and dividing whole numbers by two digit divisors. However, planning that directly aligns to Common Core was not seen across the vast majority of planning documents reviewed. For example, a kindergarten math lesson plan did not include any Common Core standards or any of the school's rigor indicators.
Additional Finding

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

Findings

All teachers use rubrics, assessments and grading polices that are aligned to the school's curricula and easily offer a clear picture of student mastery. Teachers use various ways of regularly checking for student understanding during lessons.

Impact

Teachers provide students with feedback that is actionable and meaningful, particularly through conferences. Teachers make effective adjustments to lessons utilizing mid-lesson interruptions in order to meet the learning needs of all students so that students are aware of their next learning steps.

Supporting Evidence

- Feedback provided to students includes glows, grows, and go’s. For example, feedback to a student on his math assignment read, “Glow – Good job on showing all your work and your explanation, Grow – I notice you began explaining your thinking but it’s not complete. Go – Write an explanation using domain specific vocabulary by using your math vocabulary cards and the math board!” Feedback to a student's ELA writing assignment gave a glow that read “Excellent introduction and use of cite-based evidence in your opening paragraph. Grow: Be sure you organize your thoughts in a logical manner, see the last assignment example I gave you, and Go: Write your second paragraph now and remember, think logically.”

- Across classrooms, teachers use student assessment data from Teachers College Reading Levels and teacher conference notes to determine small group work and plan for multiple entry points. Teachers confer and adjust teaching based on observation of student responses and student work products. Teachers incorporate mid-lesson interruptions to provide feedback around trends in misunderstandings of a task to refocus student work. For example, during a science lesson, the teacher conducted conferences with students and used a checklist in order to memorialize student responses. Additionally, students also had opportunities to self-assess using a self-assessment checklist. At one point during the lesson, the teacher interrupted the class to address some common misconception she discovered while conferring with students. Practices such as these were seen across the vast majority of classrooms visited.

- Students shared how impactful feedback is to them. Students explained how they not only receive written feedback, but they also receive verbal feedback during every class through “conferences with the teacher.” Students were very articulate when they shared how the feedback is always aligned to their personal goals which according to a student “Makes it easier to achieve our goals.” Students also stated, “Without our teacher’s feedback it would be difficult to be successful and get good grades.” Students also explained how the feedback is always specific to them, and not general. “Feedback means something to us, not just good job or nice work.”
Findings
School leaders consistently communicate high expectations associated with the Danielson *Framework for Teaching* and the school’s instructional focus, most notably rigorous instruction. Staff consistently communicate expectations connected to college and career readiness to all families.

Impact
There is training and a system of accountability for all instructional expectations, as well as support for families to understand their child’s progress toward academic expectations.

Supporting Evidence
- School leaders shared how they do a lot of the communicating of school expectations through the professional development (PD) plan in the school. The PD plan is very transparent and directly aligned to student outcomes and data. PD is aligned to teacher goals, feedback from observations, and feedback from the school’s instructional coaches. In addition, school leaders, instructional coaches and teacher leaders meet regularly to discuss what each has seen through the school’s learning walks. Teachers have come forward recently and agreed to be videotaped in order to review their lessons and receive feedback on how each lesson can be improved. During the meeting with teachers, they shared how they are fully aware of all of the expectations placed upon them, but they also mentioned that they receive large amounts of support from coaches and leaders with respect to making sure they are meeting all expectations.

- During the parent meeting, parents expressed that they receive a generous amount of ongoing feedback about their children’s progress. Parents shared their appreciation of the inclusiveness of the school. This is most notable with how all students, regardless of classification are in the same classes. Every classroom in the school is in an Integrated Collaborative Team taught class. This, according to parents, really shows the deep level of commitment and understanding to all students social-emotional needs. Parents also explained how they receive daily emails, phone calls, text messages, newsletters and the parent communication section of their child’s notebook in order to know exactly what is going on in the school. One parent shared how she has children in other schools and “The communication here is so much better than at my children’s other schools.”

- School leaders communicate high expectations aligned to the school’s instructional focus through frequent cycles of observations with timely feedback and actionable next steps that are aligned to the Danielson *Framework for Teaching*. Across all classrooms visited, school leaders identified how teachers are incorporating their feedback specifically by asking higher-order thinking questions, probing questions to elicit student thinking, and small group work. School leaders were able to highlight examples of increasing levels of effectiveness in teacher practice. In addition, feedback to teachers consistently reminded them to be mindful of incorporating the school’s rigor indicators into every lesson and “Assure that rigor is always a priority in all planning as it is part of the school’s instructional focus.”
Additional Finding

| Quality Indicator: | 4.1 Teacher Support and Supervision | Rating: | Well Developed |

Findings

School leaders, instructional coaches, teacher leaders and peers support the development of all teachers with an effective and strategic use of frequent classroom observations. Feedback accurately captures teacher strengths, areas of focus and actionable next steps.

Impact

Feedback articulates clear expectations towards teacher development and aligns with teachers’ professional goals which has led to elevated schoolwide instructional practices.

Supporting Evidence

- Feedback to teachers accurately captures the events in the classroom, teacher strengths, areas of focus, as well connections to teachers’ goals both in writing and during post-observation conversations. For example, feedback to one teacher praised the teacher for students taking ownership during the lesson when they “selected to use questions rather than post-it notes as their monitoring structure.” The school leaders offered next steps that included having the teacher take more professional risks and allowing students to engage in even more ownership throughout the lesson. A second observation praised the teacher for including all five of the school’s rigor indicators into her lesson. Next steps included working on questioning strategies that will support more self-reflection and self-assessment for students. The school leader also reminded the teacher to continue working on including opportunities for math discourse which is a personal goal for the teacher.

- School leaders conduct frequent strategic classroom observations in order to support all teachers. All observations, whether formal or informal engage in a pre- and post-observation conference in order to fully support teachers and engage in meaningful comprehensive conversations around the classroom visit. School leaders and teachers both share how much they value those conversations as it allows for constructive dialogue centered on instructional expectations and teacher pedagogical improvement. Teachers also enjoy the post-observation conferences as it allows them to bring in artifacts including examples of student work to use as conversation pieces during the conference. In addition, the leadership cabinet engages in observations in groups in order to norm the observation process and offer teachers feedback that is structured in the same way, regardless of which administrator conducts the observation.

- All teachers feel supported by the observation process conducted by school administrators, instructional coaches, teacher leaders, and teacher peers. During the meeting with teachers, they shared how impactful it is being observed by so many different staff members. One teacher shared how the observation process has really helped to strengthen her practice and she very much looks forward to having visitors in her class at any time. Other teachers shared how this year they have seen a much larger number of teachers who are opening their classrooms and they believe it is because of how much they value the feedback that is offered to them.
Findings

All teachers are engaged in professional inquiry-based team meetings and take active leadership roles throughout the school by facilitating team meetings and PD sessions at the school and for the district.

Impact

There is schoolwide coherence and improved instructional practices and teacher’s voice plays an integral role in key decisions making.

Supporting Evidence

- There has been a strong impact on teacher instructional practice throughout the school. Learning walks have been extremely impactful as according to teachers, it is a holistic way of learning that allows all teachers to acquire different learning styles and tools that will be beneficial to their pedagogical practices. Teachers shared how they can go to any of their peers for assistance or simply as a thought partner. School leaders shared that through the work of teacher teams, teachers have been able to develop skills that they use when looking at student work products and data. During the meeting with teachers, they shared how working closely has helped them make important decisions. For example, through teamwork, teachers made the discovery that they began pen and paper work too soon with kindergarten students, and as a result have pushed this unit further into the school year.

- Teacher leadership roles are embedded throughout the school. All staff members including paraprofessionals lead PD sessions. Staff members attend regular PD sessions off campus and consistently turnkey learning to all colleagues. Teachers also take leadership roles through the inquiry cycles as they facilitate professional collaborations. Additionally, teachers have conducted PD for district staff members as well. Each teacher cohort has a lead teacher that acts as support for their colleagues and assists teachers in meeting schoolwide instructional expectations and impact learning for students they share. For example, during a team meeting, teachers discussed common students that some colleagues struggled with, when other teachers were successful. Teachers shared strategies they use and offered their colleagues feedback.

- All teachers are engaged in professional inquiry that has led to improved instruction and high student achievement. During the Quality Review, teacher leaders, instructional coaches and the assistant principal met in structured inquiry in order to continue the process of implementing the school’s new feedback rubric for use with students. At the start of the meeting, the assistant principal reviewed the protocol procedure, and the focus of the meeting which was to review the feedback rubric and discuss any adjustments that need to be made prior to rolling it out to the staff. One member shared a concern with language and being student friendly for all students, and others had questions about the size and whether it could be condensed somewhat. The team agreed to meet one more time prior to sharing the rubric with the staff. Work such as this, has affected student achievement, as student scores on the ELA and math state exams are significantly higher than the city average. In 2017 students scoring a level three or four in ELA was 71 percent compared to the city score of 40 percent. Students scoring a level three or four on the state math exam were 76 percent compared to the city average of 42 percent.