Quality Review Report

2017-2018

P.S. X088 - S. Silverstein Little Sparrow School

Early Childhood 09X088

1340 Sheridan Avenue
Bronx
NY 10456

Principal: Melinda Hyer

Dates of Review:
May 15, 2018 and May 17, 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


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, accessible</td>
<td>Additional Finding</td>
<td>Developing</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1.2 Develop teacher pedagogy from a coherent set of beliefs about how students</td>
<td>Area of Focus</td>
<td>Developing</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2.2 Align assessments to curricula, use on-going assessment and grading practices,</td>
<td>Additional Finding</td>
<td>Developing</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

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>To what extent does the school...</th>
<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>Area of Celebration</td>
<td>Proficient</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>
<td>Proficient</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

## Systems for Improvement

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>To what extent does the school...</th>
<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>
<td>Proficient</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>
<td>Developing</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>
<td>Proficient</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>
<td>Developing</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>
<td>Developing</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Area of Celebration

| Quality Indicator: | 1.4 Positive Learning Environment | Rating: | Proficient |

Findings

The school’s approach to culture-building, discipline, and self-management includes yoga techniques that support the social-emotional well-being of students and staff. The school community aligns professional development and family outreach to support and adopt positive behaviors.

Impact

Students exhibit positive behaviors and participate in school activities that promote a safe and orderly environment. Professional learning around a growth mindset and backwards design result in the adoption of effective academic and personal behaviors.

Supporting Evidence

- Through the Fly Learning Arts program, teachers have received professional learning to teach strategies to their students that promote mindfulness, breathing, and concentration. Consultants provide support by conducting follow-up visits in the classrooms to provide feedback on the effectiveness of the strategies that are implemented. For example, teachers use deep breathing exercises with their students and students in turn learn to use the strategies when they feel the need. Teachers report that the strategies have helped students calm down and during high stress situations. For example, during the administration of high stakes assessments students have been observed using deep breathing. Teachers play nature sounds in the background as complete their work. Incorporating these techniques have led to students’ increased awareness of their bodies as well as increased levels of attention.

- The school fosters an inclusive environment by including student voice in selecting activities to engage in during lunch and breakfast. Students themselves supervise different activities in the cafeteria. For example, students in grade three are paired up and given the responsibility to guide students in kindergarten. During lunch, students were tying shoes, monitoring, and helping in the bathrooms and when students were watching a movie. Students participated in board games and at the coloring table. School leaders supervised while students conducted their responsibilities in an orderly manner. Another initiative to promote inclusiveness in the school, was having the author, Timothy Bellavia who wrote We are All the Same Inside and The Inside Story, provide a residency to help students embrace their common humanity, while exploring the various aspects of diversity. Teachers shared that all students, including those with disabilities, are included and nurtured.

- Professional development for both teachers and parents promote effective academic and personal behaviors. For example, the staff receives professional development every Monday. During the eighty minutes, teachers are provided with professional learning around fostering a growth mindset, backward design, implementing a reading and writing workshop model, having high expectations, and explicit instruction. Teachers and parents have been trained on the five-handy rules of the school and the growth mindset. Each finger corresponds to a schoolwide rule such as respect yourself and others, remember school behavior, and be prepared to learn. Workshops for parents, such as for incoming kindergarten students on informing parents of the skills that children should master before entering kindergarten, and for all parents on encouraging a growth mindset are offered. Parents reported that the growth mindset workshop and other workshops such as making puppets, and anti-bullying ensure a positive learning environment in the school.
Findings

Across classrooms, teaching practices are becoming aligned to the school's beliefs about how students learn best. Teaching practices do not yet consistently provide students with multiple entry points into the curricula.

Impact

Missed opportunities for explicit instruction, student engagement and promotion of a growth mindset hinders students' ability to produce meaningful work products. Additionally, teaching practices result in uneven student engagement in challenging tasks and limited demonstration of higher-order thinking skills by all learners.

Supporting Evidence

- Across classrooms, teachers are starting to demonstrate teaching that is aligned to the school's core belief that students learn best by being actively engaged, understanding a purpose for learning, and explicit instruction. Throughout classrooms, students were compliant as teachers conducted teacher-directed lessons. For example, during a whole-class writing lesson, the teacher introduced a persuasive writing feedback checklist by asking questions to the class such as, “If I need to convince someone, what do I need?” The checklist was projected on the board. One student answered, “You need an opinion sentence,” which was the first item on the list. In another classroom, during a social studies lesson, the teacher had students read the objective which was about identifying the importance of family and communities. Students were tasked with completing a t-chart. Before releasing the children to work in pairs, the teacher provided two examples. Explicit instruction was evident in these classrooms with the modeling of the task. However, there were inconsistent opportunities for students to engage in dialogue, thus limiting student engagement and demonstration of thinking.

- During a math lesson, the lesson objective, estimating the length of objects, was projected on the board. Students were provided with rulers and released to measure items listed in their workbook page. The students measured their desks, an easel, and other items. The teacher walked around ensuring that students completed their task on their own. During another math lesson, the teacher had students working in groups to solve a measurement problem. Students had to analyze the question by talking about what information they needed to solve the problem. In one group, one student took the lead role and asked questions to lead the rest of the group, such as, “What operation do we need to use?” After about three minutes, the teacher stopped the class and asked them to reflect on their effort using the effort rubric that every class has to reinforce the growth mindset. However, in most classrooms, there were missed opportunities for students to engage in using the effort rubric or explicit instruction, such as explaining the difference between the estimation and measuring as in the first example or the consistent use of the effort rubric.

- Across classrooms, there were inconsistent uses of multiple entry points so that all learners demonstrate higher-order thinking skills in their work products. In a self-contained class, the teacher provided different methods of presentation of sentences for students to use context clues to define difficult words. Two students used sentences written on sentence strips while others had their sentences on leveled worksheets. However, in another classroom, the teacher had the same checklist projected on the board and all students including English Language Learners (ELLs) and students with disabilities had to use the same checklist with no additional visuals, higher-level checklists, or grouping to engage in dialogue to interpret the checklist. In some classrooms, limited use of multiple entry points hinders engagement.
Findings
School leaders and faculty are in the process of aligning curricula to the Common Core Learning Standards and the instructional shifts. Rigorous habits and higher-order skills are inconsistently emphasized across curricula and tasks.

Impact
Lesson and unit plans for literacy evidence coherence that promote college and career readiness. Additionally, curricular documents evidence an inconsistent focus on emphasizing rigorous tasks for all students, including ELLs and students with disabilities.

Supporting Evidence

- The school is in the process of aligning curricula to the Common Core Learning Standards. For example, a first grade lesson lists two Common Core standards, one for writing, and one for speaking and listening. Students are tasked with giving constructive feedback and using the feedback from a partner to revise their writing. In a grade two literacy lesson, the lesson plan lists two reading standards to determine the meaning of words using context clues and phrases in a text relevant to a grade two topic or subject area. Literacy curricula evidence coherence, for example, in the overview of units for the year, the standards for each grade level evidence a staircase of complexity. However, coherence for mathematics has yet to be developed.

- The school started to integrate the instructional shifts and build coherence in literacy to promote college and career readiness for all students. However, in math, a review of two math lesson plans evidence that the school is starting to integrate the instructional shifts but have yet to show coherence for math. For example, in grade two, the lesson plan called for students to understand estimation when measuring objects. However, in a grade three lesson plan, the standard written on the lesson plan, to measure and estimate volumes and masses, was planned but not aligned to the activity which was about estimating to the half-inch and inches using a ruler. There was not yet a connection to the measurement concepts students learn in second grade to build new understanding about measurement.

- A review of curricular documents reveals inconsistent plans to have all students engage in rigorous tasks. Though lesson plans articulate explicit instruction, they have yet to evidence the gradual release of responsibility using higher-order skills and rigorous habits. For example, in a grade three English Language Arts lesson plan, students were tasked with writing one or two paragraphs about a time they created a game with a friend. In another kindergarten reading lesson plan, the students are charged with putting a thumb up when they hear dialogue as the teacher reads aloud a book. In a first grade social studies lesson plan, students are learning about the importance of community helpers. The lesson plan consisted of students filling out a T-chart to list community helpers and explain why they are important. Tasks such as these reflect lower levels of Webb Depth of Knowledge for all students including students with disabilities and ELLs.
Additional Finding

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

Findings
Common assessments are in place but results are inconsistently used to adjust instruction. Teachers’ assessment practices inconsistently reflect the use of ongoing checks for understanding.

Impact
The use of common assessment data is mainly used to create groups and identify students in need of interventions with limited impact on instructional adjustments. Teachers inconsistently utilize checks for understanding and results of common assessments to modify instruction to meet students’ learning needs.

Supporting Evidence

- The school uses Fountas and Pinnell (F&P) to determine reading levels of students, rubrics to assess writing, and checklists. For example, an assessment calendar evidences a list of assessments that are administered in reading and writing every six weeks. Teachers use the instructional reading levels of students to form their guided reading groups. The school tracks the progress of students’ reading levels by percentage for the beginning, middle, and end of the year. In writing, teachers analyze student writing from the beginning, middle, and end of year. Teachers submit a writing development summary to school leaders with the data results, findings, list of at risk students, patterns, and implications for instruction. One of the grade three summaries is based on the school’s writing development rubric which includes components such as personal style, text form, text language features, conventions, and process. The summary outlines that for whole class instruction the teacher will focus on elaboration and for small group instruction, the focus will be on orientation. There will also be an individual focus on using varied nouns and verbs. A teacher reported that she analyzes her class’s data to ensure that standards are addressed and monitors progress by conferring with students. Teachers are starting to use the results of the data for reading and writing, but have yet to evidence adjustments of curricula and instruction across grades.

- The school uses GO Math! assessments to track students in the beginning, middle, and end of the year. The school leaders create a spread sheet with the results of the assessments and breakdown of performance by subgroups. Teachers report using the math series to guide their instruction because they want to ensure that the standards are addressed. Though teachers have been provided with consultants to support their instruction in mathematics and manipulatives, these have yet to translate into evidence of using common assessments in mathematics to make instructional and curricular adjustments.

- In a grade three reading lesson, the teacher elicited responses from students about adding important events to include in a timeline about Derek Jeter. The teacher asked, “What can I add?” Students referred to a nearby chart about the player’s facts. A student responded, “Add when he was born.” The teacher continued asking questions to elicit responses from students. As she continued, she emphasized that details added to a timeline should be significant. She had students turn and talk about what they thought were important details; however, students were discussing insignificant facts. In a math lesson, students were tasked with estimating the length of objects in the classroom. The teacher provided rulers for students. Students went around and measured the objects but provided exact measurements. The teacher continued to walk around to ensure students were completing the task, yet, did not check for understanding on whether students understood that they needed to estimate. In other classrooms, there were missed opportunities to use checks for understanding to make effective instructional adjustments.
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 consistently convey high expectations to staff through ongoing feedback and professional learning aligned to the Danielson Framework for Teaching. Teacher teams are developing a culture for learning that communicates high expectations for all students.

Impact

Ongoing communication and support by school leaders around professional development ensures teachers' understanding of expectations around teaching and learning. Teacher teams are working toward ensuring that instruction across classrooms reflects the growth mindset and explicit instruction.

Supporting Evidence

- School leaders consistently communicate high expectations rooted in the Danielson Framework for Teaching. To launch a growth mindset in the school by promoting student self-assessment and engaging students in learning through explicit instruction, teachers were provided with professional learning and time to plan units of study to teach students about having a growth mindset. For example, to open the school year, the school leaders conducted a PowerPoint presentation on the expectation of having a growth mindset and what it looks like in classrooms and in lesson planning. School leaders followed-up with additional training during their Monday professional learning meetings. In another follow-up email to the faculty, the school leaders reminded the staff of the Explicit Instruction Framework and the expectation of having a pre-instructional set in all lesson plans to prepare students for the instruction that follows.

- School leaders provide teachers with a staff handbook, other documents that evidence communication of having high expectations, and professional learning. For example, in addition to the staff handbook, teachers are provided with eighty minutes of professional learning every Monday. During these sessions, there are professional learning opportunities on the different components of Danielson Framework for Teaching. For example, for designing coherent instruction, school leaders discussed the difference between an aim and an objective and charged teachers with looking at their lesson plans and revising their objectives based on their new knowledge. In addition to these professional learning opportunities, school leaders have conducted professional learning on the expectations around using authentic texts, implementing the workshop model, and provided teachers with a compilation of tools to assess reading and writing in their classrooms. Teachers reported and all agreed that they hold each other accountable for taking away something from their learning to apply in their classrooms and all feel responsible for the learning of all students.

- Teachers communicate high expectations to students and offer verbal and written feedback to support them in preparing them for the next level. For example, bulletin boards around the school evidence written feedback to students. In addition, teachers write the standard as “I can” statements at the beginning of lessons. Students keep track of their own progress by using “I can” checklists for writing units. For example, in student portfolios, checklists are used by students such as on writing an opinion essay, where a student circled that she can introduce the topic. Students reported receiving feedback from teachers to let them know if they need to correct their work. Students also reported that the growth mindset means that they need to try their best, read, and write, and score their work. One third grade student reported feeling prepared for fourth grade because the teacher taught them to write paragraphs but now they must write essays. In addition, the school communicates high expectations through their attendance policies, five handy rules, and growth mindset posters. There is a bulletin board with the names of students with one hundred percent attendance each month.
Additional Finding

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

Findings

The majority of teachers are engaged in structured professional collaborations. Teacher teams use a protocol in their analysis of student work once every month.

Impact

Teacher teams’ use of an inquiry approach is developing across the teams and does not yet consistently result in progress towards goals. Analysis of student work has yet to result in progress toward goals for groups of students or improved teacher practice.

Supporting Evidence

- Teacher teams meet informally and formally for common planning or with the instructional coach and are starting to conduct inquiry work. For example, a team meeting facilitated by the instructional coach was held with two teachers. The instructional coach used a protocol to examine the mid-unit work of one at level, below, and above level students. The teachers were provided with time to read and analyze the work. One teacher shared that she noticed that the students had introductions in their writing which included a hook. The team concluded that the students did not know the difference between having noteworthy facts instead of insignificant facts while writing about someone who is famous. As teachers discussed next steps, they filled out an action plan template. The leader made suggestions about resources to use such as the *Reading Strategies Book* by Jennifer Serravallo which was provided to all teachers.

- School leaders conducted professional development on the use of the Learning Protocol to analyze student progress towards established goals and to make instructional adjustment decisions during teacher team meetings. After this session, teachers were tasked with analyzing their students’ progress and creating an action plan. Though the inquiry protocol was rolled out to the staff, it has yet to translate into team inquiry work and be embedded throughout the year with consistency. For example, though there is a calendar of when groups of teachers are scheduled to plan items such as math centers, opinion writing, and planning lessons for guided reading, there is no evidence of inquiry work on a consistent basis to identify a problem of practice. A formal system to conduct inquiry work on a regular basis is developing across grades and subjects.

- Analysis of data on groups of students are facilitated by the instructional coach which occur during the eighty minutes Monday sessions or scheduled throughout the year as it is reflected in the Common Planning Calendar. Data on groups of students is analyzed; however, there is yet to be evidence that demonstrates the creation of action plans to address needs of students and to strengthen teacher practice. Analysis of teacher ratings in classroom observation reports show lack of progress toward engaging students in learning and teams’ meeting minutes have yet to demonstrate steps toward implementing action plans and follow-up meetings to record student progress toward learning goals for groups of students and improvement of teacher practice.