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. 121 Throop 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>To what extent does the school...</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</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>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 Focus</td>
<td>Developing</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>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
### School Quality Ratings continued

#### 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>Additional Finding</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>Proficient</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>
<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>Proficient</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>Proficient</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Area of Celebration

| Quality Indicator: | 4.1 Teacher Support and Supervision | Rating: | Proficient |

Findings

School leaders support teachers, including new teachers, with feedback based on observations and analysis of student work. Feedback to teachers accurately captures strengths, challenges, and next steps on specific feedback forms and additional supports from mentors and coaches.

Impact

New teachers are supported by informal observations and feedback forms promoting professional growth and reflection. The principal’s feedback to teachers addresses instructional concerns that are tied to schoolwide expectations.

Supporting Evidence

- An informal observation of a first-year teacher reveals comments based on student work that include feedback in the developing area, using assessment in instruction. The principal stated, “You gained some evidence of student understanding, for example, what do text clues look like? However, there was no explicit feedback to further student understanding.” Additional supports included, sharing a Google Drive that contains methodology on how to use various checks for understanding. The principal also arranged for the teacher to have a mentor and a coach to work with the teacher on improving instructional practices.

- Teacher supports include formal observations that are tied to instructional expectations. The principal has stated that teachers are expected to demonstrate support for English Language Learners (ELLs). Upon review of a formal observation of a teacher, the principal stated, “Learning targets were clearly stated, written and demonstrated.” Areas of growth for the teacher included, “Embed language objectives into all of your lessons that are directly aligned to the content objectives.” Next steps for the teacher included to continue anticipating misconceptions and challenges in ELLs. An additional formal observation showed feedback to the teacher that included, “You provided a clear model of the expectations. Help expand students’ thinking by asking them to explain and make deeper connections between what they say and the focus of the lesson.” As a result of feedback to teachers, one teacher stated that the focus on ELLs has enabled her to adapt instruction for all students. Another teacher stated that the feedback has enabled her to improve on questioning and discussion techniques.

- The principal uses an observation feedback form for first-year teachers that is separate from the schoolwide observation form. The form uses glows and grows. Based on an informal observation from a readers workshop, the principal provided glows and grows for the teacher to review. The principal stated that the instructional focus was on checking for understanding as an assessment method during instruction. Glows included the teacher having clear routines and student behavior was positive as students were focused on their tasks and the teacher had a clear understanding of teaching a guided reading lesson. The grow for the teacher included giving students an opportunity to discuss ideas among themselves. The principal further stated that information from turn and talk could be used to generate questioning and provided examples such as fist to five, in which students raised fingers to demonstrate their understanding and student self-assessment cards. All new teachers receive these feedback forms. Teachers have stated that it adds an additional layer of support to their growth.
Findings

Across classrooms, teaching practices are becoming aligned to the curricula and beginning to reflect a set of beliefs about how students learn best in a student-centered environment and through teacher modeling.

Impact

All students do not produce meaningful work products. Inconsistent practices such as turn and talk and classroom discussions reflect uneven levels of student participation.

Supporting Evidence

- During the review of a grade-four English Language Arts (ELA) class, students were observed in a turn and talk on the topic, “Share out a prediction on a character that you read about” based on the book *Tia Lola*. One student stated, “I’m making a prediction that my character will have a birthday party.” Another student stated, “I predict that she will be very excited to see her mother.” When the teacher asked why, the student stated, “Because she did not see her for a long time.” Although these students were engaged in the lesson, other students in the class did not participate in the discussion. This was evident as some students were observed not speaking to each other. They were sitting at their desks silently during the turn and talk.

- School leaders and teachers have stated that students learn best through student-centered learning. During the observation of a grade four/five ELA class, students were observed working on text-based questions. Students were working independently in small groups about what questions they might see in the text. The teacher was taking notes. One group was talking about how the author’s clues may trick them. They also talked about summarizing details in the story. Although these students were exposed to a student-centered environment, this was not evident in some classes visited. For example, in a grade-two math class, students were observed working on using a strategy that might be used to find the unknown. Although a student went to the document camera to show his work, the student was not allowed the opportunity to elaborate on the answer, rather the teacher provided the answers for the student, stating, “I noticed you use number lines to explain the subtraction and addition.” The teacher lectured the entire time during the observation without student collaboration.

- School leaders stated that students learn best through teacher modeling. In a grade-five ELA class, students were reading narratives and writing characteristics of the narrative. The teacher modeled for the students by reading a passage from the book, *The Most Beautiful Roof in the World*. The teacher pointed out characteristics that included, “ascending to the canopy” and “rain forest scientists stood in the deep shadows of the forest floor.” After modeling, students were given another passage to read. Students wrote examples in their notes which included, “The author is helping us visualize what is in the rain forest.” Although, in this class, the modeling was successful in helping students understand the task, this was not evident in all classes visited. In a grade-one math class, the teacher gave instructions on identifying tens and ones in a number, the lesson did not provide teacher modeling and as a result, students were unclear of their next steps, and asking many questions to clarify the task as they went into small group.
**Additional Finding**

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

**Findings**

School leaders and faculty ensure that curricula are aligned to Common Core Learning Standards and the instructional shifts. Curricula and academic tasks are planned and refined using student work and data.

**Impact**

Teachers use Depth of Knowledge (DOK) questions across unit and lesson plans to support college and career readiness for students. Lesson plans support students with disabilities by being refined to reflect how students will be cognitively engaged.

**Supporting Evidence**

- A grade-five reading unit demonstrates higher-order thinking questions to reflect skills that will be useful for college and career preparedness. The unit requires students to learn how to search for answers to a question through different texts to build deeper understanding about the various topics. The unit also requires students to work with DOK skills, “Investigate and draw conclusions based on their research.” “Interpret research and classify information,” and “Synthesize information into a narrative.” An additional example is evident in a grade-three math lesson plan. Students are required to answer DOK questions that include, “solve problems using various strategies” and “solve real world problems that involve dividing amounts among groups.” Most units and lesson plans expose students to college and career readiness by integrating DOK skills.

- Common Core Learning Standards and instructional shifts are incorporated into lesson plans. A self-contained literacy plan requires students to recall parts of a literary essay. Common Core Learning Standards include, making a connection between the text of a story and identify specific elements of the text. Another standard included having students work with the components of a literary essay while being aware of the major theme. Additionally, instructional shifts are integrated such as, creating a real-world situation that a given set of data can be used to plot data. An additional instructional shift that is evident in the lesson is asking students to answer text-based questions by locating key details and examples from the text. The use of Common Core Learning Standards is evident in most lesson plans reviewed.

- To support refinement of the curriculum, an example was provided that showed how a lesson plan was modified based on student work and Individualized Education Plans (IEP). A kindergarten lesson showed how students will be supported. Teachers have stated that students with disabilities were struggling with placing things in chronological order during class work. The teacher modified the lesson plan to include specific differentiation for the needs of the individual students and their IEP goals. Modifications included: “Tier one students will use beginning sounds to label their pictures; Tier two students will work with teacher guidance to add sentences about each picture they placed on their timeline.” Accommodations based on IEPs included, One student will have redirection, another student will have preferred seating and other students will have guided turn and talks. Most lesson plans reviewed demonstrate differentiation and modifications for students based on performance levels or other educational needs.
Findings

Across classrooms, teachers use rubrics that are aligned with the school's curricula. Teachers' assessment practices consistently reflect the use of ongoing checks for understanding and student self-assessments such as checklists.

Impact

Teachers use rubrics to provide actionable feedback to students in the form of glow and grows and students understand their next learning steps. Teachers check for understanding during classroom instruction and make modifications during the lesson that meet students' learning needs.

Supporting Evidence

- Teachers make students aware of their next learning steps by providing feedback on rubrics. On a grade-five writing rubric, students were rated on four levels: below grade level, approaching grade level, on grade level and exceeding grade level. The teacher rated one piece of student work a three, on grade level. Feedback to the student included the following glows, “You do an amazing job with your overall structure.” Grows included, “Look over your work for correct capitalization in portions of your writing.” The teacher also provided next steps which included, “In your writing, you should try to include quotes from either the text, videos or data.” The teacher provided an example by quoting data: “Fracking pollutes one out of ten environments due to drilling into the earth’s surface.” Students have stated that the feedback helps them to make adjustments to their writing based on the next steps.

- Teachers use checks for understanding to improve student learning. During the observation of a grade-three math class, the teacher modeled how to divide a circle into three parts. The teacher then asked the students to cut a circle into six parts and eight parts. The teacher observed that students were struggling with dividing the shape. As a result, the teacher split students up into teams to work with each other. The teacher paired students with those who were mastering the concept and those who were struggling. As a result, students were able to complete the task. This was evident as students shared out examples of measured diagrams. One student stated, “I divided mine in half and then each half into threes.” Teachers stated that checks for understanding happens organically in most classes and adjustments made based on the needs of the student.

- Students use a self-assessment checklist to record their level of understanding in their work products. Teachers provide feedback to the students to help support their learning. The checklist is a three-point rubric that allows students to record their scores from zero to two points. One student gave himself two points in the areas of using valid inference or claims from the text, including relevant facts and sentences that are easy to read. Feedback from the teacher included, “You responded to the question with sufficient evidence to prove your thinking. I would like you to make connections that include background knowledge.” When asked how the feedback will help the student’s growth, the teacher stated that the student will be placed into a small heterogeneous group to learn from peers. In an additional example, a student recorded his score as a one, meaning he must include some relevant facts from the text. The teacher stated that this student will use annotated text to improve on citing text-based evidence. Most teachers interviewed use student’s self-reflections to adjust instruction for students.
Additional Finding

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

Findings

School leaders consistently communicate high expectations to the entire staff that are tied to the Danielson Framework for Teaching using items such as a staff handbook and memos. Staff consistently communicate expectations that are connected to a path to college and career readiness.

Impact

Teachers are held accountable for the high expectations for their professional growth. Guidance counselors communicate with parents to help them understand their child’s progress as they move to the next level.

Supporting Evidence

- The principal distributes the staff handbook to the instructional staff at the beginning of the year to communicate expectations. Each staff member signs that they have received the handbook. The handbook states that teachers must “create a positive approach that emphasizes students making good choices.” After receiving the handbook, teachers are trained in this area. This was evident in a professional development (PD) session on classroom management attended by teachers. The agenda stated, “Participants will learn behavior management strategies that focus on prevention, explicit instruction of behavior and social-emotional learning and a system to acknowledge positive behaviors.” Teachers used a registration link to sign up for the professional development. Teachers have stated that the PD has enabled them to address the social-emotional needs of their students which in turn allows them to also focus on academics.

- The principal has provided a series of memos to communicate instructional expectations. In a memo that was sent to all staff on October 12, 2017, the principal stated, “It is important to include checks for understanding strategies to quickly assess whether or not your students understood the lesson.” The principal further stated that taking notes during instruction will help with gaining information on what the child is comprehending. An additional example of the expectation was recorded in a memo dated October 31, 2017. Under the title, instructional focus, the principal stated, “If we are consistently checking for understanding and looking at student work then we can make adjustments to curriculum and instructional practices leading to student achievement.” Teachers have stated that informal observations of the implementation of instructional foci leads to personalized professional development for different teachers.

- The technology coordinator works in conjunction with the guidance counselors to ensure that technology is used to communicate with parents about their child’s progress. For example, parents in grades three, four and five utilize a Google site so they can review their child’s progress. There is also a school website that informs parents of schoolwide expectations and initiatives. As a result of information that parents access, they talk to their child’s guidance counselor about their child’s progress. An example was articulated by a parent. The parent stated that her child was struggling in literacy. As a result of this concern, she was able to make arrangements with the counselor to have the technology teacher give her access to the school literacy electronic program to enable her child to practice at home. When asked why this was significant the parent stated, “My child has to be college ready and I think literacy is important to make sure she is.” Most parents stated that the school is consistent with communication in preparing their children to be successful beyond their current school.
Findings

Teacher teams consistently analyze assessment data and student work for students they share or on whom they are focused. Distributed leadership structures are in place such as having teacher data facilitators.

Impact

Grade-level teams look at student work and end-of-unit assessments that result in improved teacher practice and progress towards student goals. Data and grade-team facilitators have a voice in instructional decisions that influence student learning across the school.

Supporting Evidence

- An observation of a grade-two team meeting demonstrated how teachers collaborate to look at student data from a unit-three summative assessment. The team used the “Learning from Student Work Protocol” to conduct a data analysis. Noticings from the data showed that students struggled with writing an extended response with a beginning, a middle and an end. Also, students struggled with punctuation, grammar and writing complex sentences. Classroom practices that will be incorporated included, creating additional lessons that focus on grammar, punctuation and capitalization. Teachers also discussed including a lesson on how to write an introduction. Next steps included editing the unit to reflect the changes made. When asked how the protocol improves student learning, one teacher stated, “The data helps us target specific areas and we adjust our teaching strategies to address those concerns.” This was evident as a teacher stated that they used this protocol to address gaps in student learning across the grade in different subjects. Teachers then incorporated checks for understanding. As a result, Measures of Student Learning (MOSL) data showed increase in student performance.

- The role of the data facilitator is designed to give teachers a voice that will have an impact on instructional decisions. Each grade has a data facilitator who works with grade-level teams to present and analyze data and make instructional decisions based on that data. They are also responsible for updating the Google Drive and generating class and grade-level reports. They also assist teams in finding resources to meet the needs of struggling students. The impact of their role was evident at a grade-one team meeting. Student work samples showed that students were struggling with supporting main ideas. As a result, the data facilitator provided examples of lessons that require students to expand ideas and support details and make “I Can” statements. This resulted in a grade-wide practice to use “I Can” statements.

- To support student learning, the grade-three team presented minutes from a meeting. Each teacher listed a skill that their students were struggling with based on class work. For example, one class struggled with “making bar graphs with tiles.” Another teacher stated that her students struggled with determining an area to add to one hundred square units. Teachers collaborated to support each other to discuss academic supports for the groups. The team suggested using a modified bar graph that includes correct increments to practice on. They also suggested using distributive property to support student understanding. Teachers also suggested using step-by-step student directions in the lesson plan. Teachers have stated that these collaborations help them better understand their students’ needs and improve their methodology to support the instructional foci.