Quality Review Report

2017-2018

P.S. 236 Langston Hughes
Elementary 09X236
1871 Walton Avenue
Bronx
NY 10453

Principal: Afrina Talukdar

Dates of Review:
November 1, 2017 - November 2, 2017

Lead Reviewer: Phyllis Siwiec
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. 236 Langston Hughes serves students in grade PK through grade 5. You will find information about this school, including enrollment, attendance, student demographics, and data regarding academic performance, at http://schools.nyc.gov/Accountability/tools/report/default.htm.

School Quality Ratings

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Instructional Core</th>
<th>Area</th>
<th>Rating</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>To what extent does the school...</strong></td>
<td><strong>Area</strong></td>
<td><strong>Rating</strong></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>Developing</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>
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</tbody>
</table>
School Quality Ratings continued

### 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>
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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 school’s instructional goals and meet student learning needs, as evidenced by meaningful student work products</td>
<td>Area of Celebration</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>
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<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>
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Area of Celebration

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Quality Indicator:</th>
<th>1.3 Leveraging Resources</th>
<th>Rating:</th>
<th>Proficient</th>
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**Findings**

The School Leadership Team (SLT) designates resources to support the instructional goals and focus on shared reading, writing across the content areas, and tiered levels of academic support. Leadership hires teachers and support staff to support small group instruction and intervention services for students, including English Language Learners (ELLs) and Students with Disabilities.

**Impact**

Targeted resource allocation supports students in producing meaningful writing products and reflecting on their progress and learning goals. Small group instruction and supports result in improved reading fluency and proficiency levels and connections to college and career readiness.

**Supporting Evidence**

- Leadership dedicated resources to develop three new instructional initiatives, which include the use of visual organizers, shared reading practices and the development of math understanding. These three initiatives focus on improving student thinking and providing rigorous instruction for all learners based on curricula aligned to Common Core Learning Standards. Leadership purchased an intensive reading intervention program and provided teachers with off and on site training to support the implementation of these instructional initiatives. As an example, 23 out of 26 teachers completed training on the use of visual organizers. Teachers and students stated that students are better prepared to organize their thinking using a variety of formats and templates and that using the tools has helped increase writing stamina. Implementation of these practices is evident in student work products and observed classroom practices. Students use the visual organizers as a support to organize and improve writing projects and enhance math understanding. Specifically, in a grade four math class, students were engaged in a math workshop and used tools to discuss math vocabulary, find multiple ways to solve problems, search for hidden questions, present, and share solutions.

- Sufficient staff and Interventions are in place to support at risk students in reaching grade level reading expectations. Program groupings and interventions for all students, including ELLs and students with disabilities, result in a multi-tiered approach. Instructional supports includes a daily block of time, the *Universal Intervention Period*, for all students, which includes one-on-one reading intervention, guided reading and blended computer-based practice. Fourteen teachers and paraprofessionals implement one-on-one literacy intervention for targeted students who receive support daily for a specified number of weeks. The Guided Reading groups are no larger than four students per group. Students who received intervention this year have demonstrated increased reading performance based on individual reading assessment data and analyzed data for each teacher, classroom and grade level.

- There has been an overall increase in reading scores and levels based on a comparison of 2016 – 2017 and 2017 – 2018 fall baseline data. Based on fall 2017 baseline data, grade two students who received intervention in grade one increased in reading performance from one to three levels. In addition, students who received summer reading support showed reading gains this year compared to those students who did not attend summer reading instruction.
Findings

Across classrooms, teaching practices are becoming aligned to the curriculum and beginning to reflect the articulated belief that if teachers follow a *workshop model* to engage students in intellectual discourse using multiple structures and provide meaningful feedback, students will improve and grow. Teaching strategies inconsistently provide multiple entry points into the curriculum.

Impact

Inconsistent teaching strategies lead to limited engagement in challenging tasks. The range of student work products across content areas are not always meaningful and sometimes represent repetitive practice, hindering some students’ ability to demonstrate their thinking in their work products.

Supporting Evidence

- Faculty articulated that a *workshop* model should include a 10 to 15 minute mini-lesson, start with every student working independently, move to partner and small group practice and conclude with the entire class discussing points of struggle, confusion or misunderstandings revealed by teachers and students. A *workshop* model was present in some classrooms visited. As an example, in a grade four math classroom, the teacher engaged students in these stages of instruction aligned to the math lesson. For this lesson, the teacher’s anecdotal information, students’ work products and school leaders’ observations of practice show evidence of student engagement, increased stamina and improved problem-solving skills.

- In another class, the teacher led students in a reading workshop entitled, “Red Herring.” This teacher conducted a defined mini-lesson with the teaching point, “Mystery readers know authors use red herrings to throw readers off track, and mystery readers don’t let that happen.” In this lesson, the teacher included all expected components of the workshop including, active engagement, a link to independent reading, and a share that discussed the connection between the teaching point and individual students’ reading. This lesson also included discussions about authentic clues versus *red herrings*. Students in this class shared their understanding of the concept and the importance of reading for clues. Although these classes aligned to the beliefs about how students learn best, other classes did not. In other classes, teachers did not engage students in a mini-lesson or extended the mini-lesson beyond the agreed upon 10 to 15 minute timeframe. In some classrooms, students sat for over 25 minutes while teachers introduced the lesson to the class and posed questions that engaged students one at a time. In these classes, the level of engagement and use of expected workshop components varied with teacher dominated instruction taking the majority of class time.

- Across classrooms visited, there was inconsistent use of entry points to provide access for all students including ELLs and students with disabilities, limiting engagement and challenge for some students. Teacher-led whole group instruction was the primary model used to present instruction. Teacher’s questions were at a recall level, for example, in a science class the teacher asked students, “What is the name of the rock?” In some classrooms, teachers distributed worksheets and additional supports, however, these tools that lacked differentiation. In a social studies class, all students received the same recording sheets and guides to explore artifacts. In these classes, students worked on the same formatted pages resulting in some students finishing early with little to do afterwards and others pushing away the paper and giving up before completing the task.
**Additional Finding**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Quality Indicator:</th>
<th>1.1 Curriculum</th>
<th>Rating:</th>
<th>Developing</th>
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**Findings**

Faculty are beginning to align curricula and academic tasks to Common Core and content standards and integrate the instructional shifts. Curriculum planning is beginning to provide access for all students, including ELLs and students with disabilities via graphic organizers and a new math approach.

**Impact**

The level of planning for accessibility for a variety of learners is inconsistent across grades and subjects. Inconsistencies across the curricula limit coherence and hinder the promotion of college and career readiness for some students.

**Supporting Evidence**

- School leadership and faculty are in the process of aligning unit and lesson plans to Common Core or content standards and integrating selected instructional shifts. Although increasing the use of non-fiction texts across all content areas and increasing the amount and quality of writing are identified schoolwide instructional shifts, evidence of integration in curricula is inconsistent across grades and content areas. A review of lessons and unit plans demonstrate that the use of graphic organizers to support the instructional shift in writing is becoming apparent in lessons but not all teachers are aligning lessons to Common Core Learning Standards. A lack of consistency in planning results in a lack of coherence across grades and content areas.

- The school has introduced three new instructional initiatives. One of the initiatives includes a series of graphic organizers designed to facilitate higher levels of thinking for all students and is expected to be used in all classrooms from kindergarten through grade five. Another is a math program that uses student engagement and discussion as the main thrusts in developing math understandings through layered practice. The math program is currently used in grade four and beginning its implementation in grade two. The third initiative is shared reading, a five day weekly cycle that includes routine explorations of vocabulary, main ideas and comprehension of grade level reading material. However, not all grade levels are currently implementing these initiatives. Curricula includes units and lesson plans that range from a teacher-centered instructional model to a student-centered model. Although some lessons embed graphic organizers, questions and discussion prompts for small groups or partner work, it is not yet present across the curricula. The variability in curricular planning hinders cross grade coherence and results in uneven opportunities to promote college and career readiness for all students.

- Lessons and units reflect planning to provide access for all students using modeling and opportunities for practice and some teachers have begun to plan for student access through peer-to-peer discussion. A grade four math lesson contains modeling strategies and plans for multiple practice opportunities individually, in partners and in small groups. In other lesson plans, teachers use the integration of nonfiction text to support relevant and specific academic vocabulary practice in literacy, social studies and science. However, planned scaffolds for ELLs and students with disabilities is not evident across lessons and not all teachers are planning for student-to-student discussion. A lack of planning to engage diverse groups of learners, including ELLs and students with disabilities, limits access to the curricula and tasks and limits engagement for many students.
Additional Finding

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

Across classrooms, teachers use and create assessments, rubrics and grading systems that are aligned to the school’s curricula. The school uses common assessments such as New York State Education Department (NYSED) annual assessments, a leveled reading system, computer based diagnostics in math and English Language Arts (ELA), and pre and end of unit assessments in reading and writing to determine student progress towards goals.

Impact

Teachers use assessment data to provide students with actionable feedback and articulate next steps to improve performance. Teachers use the data from common assessments to adjust curricula and instruction by designing small flexible groups and identifying instructional focus areas.

Supporting Evidence

- Across classrooms, teachers have a range of feedback responses that are both informative and specific to each student. For example, using a Personal Narrative Checklist, a grade two teacher shared a comment and checked off relevant characteristics in a student writing sample under categories that included Lead, Transitions, Endings, Organization, Craft, and Spelling. The teacher commented, “Keep it up. Your story has a beginning where I could picture you playing tag with your sister. Next time, try to stay in one story.” The student also wrote a reflection in response to the teacher’s feedback, he wrote, “My one idea is to write only one story.” Students also reported that they understand and use the feedback given to them by teachers and if there is confusion, the teacher clarifies the next steps during a conference. A review of student work demonstrates that students use teacher feedback to make improvements to their work products, as drafts with feedback were evident along with final published work.

- School leadership shared an analysis of spring 2017 and spring 2016 New York State assessment data that demonstrates a six-percentage point increase in grade level proficiency in both ELA and math for grades three through five students. Leadership also shared that teacher’s analysis of both New York State and school based assessments revealed a need for continued improvement for many students across grades and classes. School leadership and staff worked together to adjust curricula and instruction by instituting the Universal Intervention Period for 30 minutes every morning. Teachers use this whole school block of time to provide reading intervention across all grades. In math, select teachers are piloting a newly adopted math program that incorporates real time checks for understanding, small group instruction and re-teaching with specific teaching points based on data collected during conferences with math partners and small groups. These teachers also adjust lessons by reviewing teaching points as a class share at the end of each lesson. A review of student work products reveals increased understanding of math concepts in these classes.

- Assessment data is accessible to all faculty through an online database. Teachers enter data for each student, obtain an analysis of their class, and grade level performance. Teachers and school leaders use these systems to monitor student progress and analyze pre and post assessments, benchmark data, writing assignments in varied genres, exit tickets and reports from the computer based math and ELA programs. Teachers review the data to identify trends that lead to revisions of curricular documents as illustrated by grade level team notes in their Record of Instructional Changes. A grade three record states that based on whole class data, instruction will focus on finessing the use of dialogue, quotation marks, leads and endings, while using more expression of feelings or stronger words.
**Additional Finding**

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<th>Quality Indicator:</th>
<th>3.4 High Expectations</th>
<th>Rating:</th>
<th>Developing</th>
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**Findings**

School leaders and staff are developing systems to support and regularly communicate with families using online applications and Parent Engagement Time. Teachers are establishing a culture for learning that communicates high expectations for all students through feedback and guidance.

**Impact**

Families are beginning to receive feedback regarding student progress toward learning expectations. Teacher teams and staff are developing feedback and guidance supports with the level of detail and clarity needed to help prepare students for their next level.

**Supporting Evidence**

- Some parents noted that the school regularly communicates with them regarding their children’s academic progress through report cards. Parents also noted that some teachers use an interactive application that is classroom based and gives parents daily updates on students’ behavior and academic performance they can access on their phones. These teachers also share homework assignments, class photos and general information and notices online. Parents of students in classes that regularly use the online system report feeling connected to classrooms and the teacher’s expectations for their children. However, not all classes use the application regularly, limiting access to information for some families.

- Faculty has established a Tuesday afternoon *Parent Engagement Time*. Some parents are beginning to visit their children’s classrooms during this time to check-in with teachers and get an update on their children’s academic and behavioral progress. Parents, teachers and students agreed that this is an important opportunity to discuss shared expectations. Some parents shared that they have in-person conversations with some teachers on Tuesdays, while other teachers schedule Parent-Teacher Conferences for all families four times per year. Although parents who attend Parent Engagement Time shared that visiting the school helps them feel connected to what is happening in their child’s classroom and supports their understanding of how well their child is meeting expectations in school, it is not yet a support used across the parent body.

- Teacher teams and staff establish a culture for learning through actionable feedback and are developing a framework for common learning expectations across content areas. The math instructional program identifies common learning expectations that provide a framework for student engagement, stamina, problem solving, communication and deeper understandings of concepts and key ideas in each lesson. The math framework provides a model for using glows and grows to hold students accountable to higher expectations in the classroom. Although the use of glows and grows on specific tasks is a common school practice, math teachers have begun to use glows and grows and debriefs to communicate common learning expectations. School leadership and staff shared that the math framework is being adapted to reading and writing instruction and eventually to science and social studies. Although teachers have begun to use the framework to provide guidance and the level of detail needed to move students to the next level of learning, the framework is a pilot and is currently only implemented in select classrooms.
Findings
The majority of teachers engage in structured, inquiry based professional collaborations connected to school goals. Teacher teams regularly analyze assessment data and student work.

Impact
Teacher collaborations, including Teacher Rounds, promote the achievement of school goals and enhance the implementation of Common Core Learning Standards. Team-level data analysis results in progress toward goals for students while strengthening the instructional capacity of teachers.

Supporting Evidence

- Teacher Rounds are one structure the school uses to develop the capacity of teacher teams. This year, teachers are involved in vertical cross-grade teams that meet regularly. During vertical meetings, teachers share videos of each other’s practice and respond with wonderings and discussion. For example, a vertical team of kindergarten through grade four teachers voluntarily meet twice a month. These teachers observe videotaped lessons of a Host Teacher, provide feedback through the lens of a schoolwide problem of practice and develop instructional commitments. All teachers commit to implement a practice and report the results at the next meeting. A review of minutes from Teacher Rounds to date revealed a process of reflection and action planning that make connections to improvements in student learning. Feedback from Teachers Rounds include discussions of student pairings, the importance of giving clear and concise directions, and how to utilize the online platform effectively. Notes from Teacher Rounds include commitments and the results of implementing new strategies including the use of a custom designed rubric for accountable talk that helped students stay focused and responsive while discussing topics and a writing partner chart to elevate confusion. Teacher Rounds provide a structure for teachers to share practice, receive feedback and develop their capacity.

- According to teachers, school leaders and a review of the Inquiry Cycle Records, the majority of teachers are involved in grade level, inquiry-based collaboration. Inquiry teams use a rubric that clearly states categories and expectations for teacher behavior, actions and responsibilities to build their capacity as a team. The categories include goals, roles, conflict resolution, task responsibility and use of time, and a focus on student learning. An example from the grade three team minutes identifies the steps they took to formulate team goals in preparation for their inquiry launch this year and identifies their next steps. Teachers across teams report the usefulness of the rubric and its guidance leading to better functioning inquiry teams.

- Teacher teams systematically analyze the strengths and challenges of student work products for the students on their grade. Through the inquiry process, teachers turn their noticings to instructional adaptations and strategies. Teacher team minutes demonstrate that teachers analyzed student writing pieces and developed thinking maps to support students during the pre-writing stages of the writing process. Teachers shared that team-level data analysis resulted in a deeper understanding of their students writing needs and an opportunity to share proposed and implemented interventions and supports that led to improved published writing pieces. A review of student work samples shared by teachers and students demonstrated improvements in written work for students utilizing the new tools.