Quality Review Report

2017-2018

Grant Avenue Elementary School
Elementary 09X449
250 East 164 Street
Bronx
NY 10456

Principal: Kristin Erat

Dates of Review:
March 22, 2018 - March 23, 2018

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

Grant Avenue Elementary School serves students in grade PK through grade 5. You will find information about this school, including enrollment, attendance, student demographics, and data regarding academic performance, at http://schools.nyc.gov/Accountability/tools/report/default.htm.

School Quality Ratings

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Instructional Core</th>
<th>Area</th>
<th>Rating</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>To what extent does the school...</td>
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<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>Proficient</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2.2 Align assessments to curricula, use on-going assessment and grading practices, and analyze information on student learning outcomes to adjust instructional decisions at the team and classroom levels</td>
<td>Additional Finding</td>
<td>Proficient</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
## School Quality Ratings continued

### School Culture

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Area</th>
<th>Rating</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1.4 Maintain a culture of mutual trust and positive attitudes that supports the academic and personal growth of students and adults</td>
<td>Additional Finding</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3.4 Establish a culture for learning that communicates high expectations to staff, students and families, and provide supports to achieve those expectations</td>
<td>Additional Finding</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

### Systems for Improvement

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<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>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3.1 Establish a coherent vision of school improvement that is reflected in a short list of focused, data-based goals that are tracked for progress and are understood and supported by the entire school community</td>
<td>Additional Finding</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4.1 Observe teachers using the Danielson Framework for Teaching along with the analysis of learning outcomes to elevate school-wide instructional practices and implement strategies that promote professional growth and reflection</td>
<td>Area of Celebration</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4.2 Engage in structured professional collaborations on teams using an inquiry approach that promotes shared leadership and focuses on improved student learning</td>
<td>Additional Finding</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5.1 Evaluate the quality of school-level decisions, making adjustments as needed to increase the coherence of policies and practices across the school, with particular attention to the CCLS</td>
<td>Additional Finding</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Area of Celebration

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

Findings
School leaders and teacher peers support the development of teachers with effective feedback and next steps from the strategic use of frequent cycles of observations. Using observations, school leaders have an effective, transparent system for managing professional development.

Impact
Strategies are implemented that promote professional growth and reflection that lead to improved quality of student work products.

Supporting Evidence

- Support for teachers is based on an analysis of student and teacher data and work products. Professional goals and learning experiences are structured around the Danielson Framework for Teaching and produce improved teacher practice and student progress. Teachers meet with school leaders in the fall for their annual goal-setting meetings, where professional goals are established. In an observation report addressing using questioning and discussion techniques (Danielson 3b), the evaluator stated as feedback that, “Metacognitive and higher order questioning is your next area for growth.” What followed was a description of next steps to teach students to think about their thinking so that deeper and more meaningful connections between themselves and the content can be made. Teachers shared that they appreciated feedback as ways to improve and reflect on instruction. They described “constant feedback” from many opportunities beyond observations, including learning partner walkthroughs, intervisitation, math coaching and debriefs, and Lesson Study, with all feedback focused on improving student performance.

- Since this school had a number of new teachers this year, school leaders developed a plan to address their needs with a differentiated strategy that also supported the more experienced teachers. The year began with formal observations of new teachers to provide a baseline. Those who presented as needing more support were provided with coaches and mentors as well as planned follow-ups. Since all teachers begin the year with goal-setting, administrators have an overview of teacher goals and the areas in which the staff will need guidance, support, and feedback in order to improve. The support of the UFT New Teacher Center is key in building capacity to support all teachers, providing resources that can be used strategically to strengthen and reinforce those who need the most support while providing leadership through mentoring. In the spring, collaborative planning occurs for next year’s needs, based on teacher and student performance, data, and work products. The Advance ratings for teachers this year shows improvement over last year’s ratings in the Danielson domains for instruction, classroom environment, and planning and preparation.

- School leaders were able to describe their strategic, transparent system for managing professional development that began with an analysis of student achievement data and work products, examining trends and gaps. To support teachers in developing and refining skills based on the Danielson Framework for Teaching, the Instructional Cabinet, made up of grade level representatives, assistant principals, coaches, and the principal, looked carefully at student data and teacher observation data regarding the components of the four domains that relate to the Common Core Learning Standards. When the curriculum needs improved alignment and students more practice or differentiation, then the staff is tasked with developing opportunities for practice and assessments to measure results. This is the place for professional development. The 5 Practices implementation is an example of professional development that led to student academic improvements in math, while teachers continue to participate in ongoing support for the new program.
Findings

Across classrooms, teaching practices, aligned to the curricula, reflect an articulated set of beliefs about how students learn best that includes rigorous student work products and discussions. However, alignment among beliefs, instructional practices, and discussions at the team level is not in place for a vast majority of classrooms.

Impact

Meaningful work products are a result of high levels of student thinking and participation. However, student ownership is not present in the vast majority of classrooms.

Supporting Evidence

- The school’s set of beliefs about how students learn best includes differentiated instruction based on student needs and strengths as well as collaboration. As a result of team collaboration, students are active and accountable for learning, with clear goals and access to materials, resources, and cohesive content. In a grade three observed lesson in math using the 5 Practices model, students started with a two-step problem to solve independently. There were base ten blocks and classroom charts available as scaffolds for students to use as needed. After working alone, with the teachers moving around the room to assess progress being made, the students then began to discuss the problems with their small group tablemates. They shared and asked questions of each other to explain their reasoning. The teachers continued to gather information and ask questions to help students clarify their thinking or listen in as students asked each other questions. Teachers’ took notes on observation sheets with specific categories about strategies students used by classification and whether they used models to solve the problem. Teachers wrote down students’ names and samples of what strategy each was using. The final column on the teachers’ observation sheets was entitled, “Who will I select to share their representations?” Teachers selected several individuals to stand and share thinking about their own approaches and that of their table team.

- In a few classes, there was no evidence of differentiation. In another primary level class, each student was asked to read out loud to a partner, who was then to give feedback on the partner’s reading skills. The students moved back and forth from the rug in one part of the room and to the tables. This movement made for a disjointed flow, and the students became restless and unfocused. An opportunity was lost for effective student collaboration, focused work products, and discussion.

- School leaders reported that the workshop format for lessons most closely supports their beliefs about learning, in that it fosters whole class, small group, and one-on-one learning, with high levels of student thinking, collaboration, and participation. Teachers believe in providing students with guided practice, allowing students to try new skills independently, and promoting student accountability by having students share work. There is a clear teaching point or goal for lessons, while instruction is explicit. Inquiry-based lessons launched with a problem with explicit teaching at the end of the lesson were evident particularly in mathematics in the 5 Practices approach. In a grade four math lesson that had the English as a New Language (ENL) teachers and a general education teacher co-teaching, the 5 Practices lesson was observed. Students began with a word problem that involved fractions with this stated goal: “I can reason about the size of fractions to precisely add and subtract mixed numbers.” They worked independently and then moved to partner work and discussed their options. Teachers moved around the room recording student discussions, word usage, and ideas.
Additional Finding

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

School leaders and teachers ensure that curricula align to the Common Core Learning Standards and integrate the instructional shift of a balance between informational and literary texts. Teachers use student work and data to plan and refine curricula and academic tasks.

Impact

Curricula and academic tasks are coherent and cognitively engaging for a variety of learners while promoting college and career readiness for all students.

Supporting Evidence

- School leaders have established the time and support for teacher teams and coaches to align the Common Core Standards with the school’s curricula. In English Language Arts (ELA), there has been an increase in the non-fiction units of study in order to maintain a balance of student engagement with informational texts and literary texts. According to school leaders, the non-fiction texts are often content-focused from social studies and science themes. For example, in grade three students learn about animals and countries through nonfiction reading and writing, while in grade one, students write like scientists by studying various insects. With an emphasis on text-based answers, writing from sources, and using academic vocabulary in writing and discussions, students have achieved at higher levels. As an outcome, the NYS ELA testing results have improved from 2014-2015, when 11 percent of students scored at proficiency, to 2016-2017, when 19 percent of students in at proficiency.

- Starting in the spring of 2016, the school made radical shifts in their mathematics curricula, moving to EngageNY modules and doubling math periods to allow for fluency work and the integration of 5 Practices, a variation on the workshop model, in math periods. In the 2014-2015 school year, the school also launched a Lesson Study initiative. Through structured Lesson Study cycles, teachers are able to conduct intervisitations with colleagues on their grade teams, focusing on 5 Practices work with particular attention to questioning and discussion. As a result of more class time for math and the curricular improvements, the student proficiency rate on the NYS math exam increased from 12 percent in 2014-2015 to 31 percent proficient in 2016-2017.

- Teacher teams meet twice weekly to modify curricula based on student work and assessments. A variety of adjustments have been made to accommodate a range of student learners. Adjustments lead to differentiated materials, tasks, and instructional groupings, so that all students are cognitively engaged. For example, papers for writing are differentiated by the number of lines, spaces for drawing, and size of handwriting along with text levels that correspond to levels of reading materials. Sentence and discussion prompts are used to assist in partner, small group, and whole group discussions. Charts in classrooms are labeled “Strong Conversational Behavior” and list what discussions look like and sound like. Examples of “looks like” include students take turns, speakers make eye contact, all partners are participating, and everyone is on task. “Sounds like” examples include discussions are on topic, connections are made to your partner, language is respectful language, and partners help one another by encouraging them. Turn and talk partnering helps students to try out ideas and give and receive feedback in a supportive structure. Student partnerships in the classroom are organized so that English Language Learners (ELLs) work with English speakers. The structures of close reading and 5 Practices math are designed for access for all students with multiple supports with revisits to the task or text. Close reading involves access to grade level materials through multiple readings, using lenses that are strategic in their focus.
Additional Finding

Quality Indicator: 2.2 Assessment
Rating: Proficient

Findings
Across classrooms, teachers use rubrics, checklists, and grading policies aligned with the school’s curricula. Teachers use common assessments to determine student progress across grades and subject areas.

Impact
Teachers provide actionable feedback to students regarding their achievement. Assessment results are used to adjust curricula and instruction.

Supporting Evidence

- Teachers use rubrics that are aligned to the school’s curricula to provide feedback to students. A grade five student produced a published informational writing non-fiction text that was an in-depth study of a topic of the student’s choice. The teacher’s feedback given with an annotated rubric stated, “Great expert tone! You provided a lot of details about your topic. Next time: Work using higher level transitions to move through your writing.” In grade four, a student’s math paper showed a self-evaluation using a 2-point rubric with teacher’s feedback. The student wrote, “I think I will get a 2 because I wrote the answer with my own words.” Another piece of math student work displayed the teacher’s feedback as, “Nice job making equivalent fractions. Next time, remember you cannot change the order when subtracting. You must borrow from the whole number.” All displayed work included teachers’ feedback, with actionable next steps.

- Each student has a math portfolio and an ELA portfolio with published work and finished projects that have been evaluated. In math, each portfolio has a lead sheet that describes in detail the standards and corresponding skills and strategies. For example, in grade four, the standards listed are modeling with mathematics, construct viable arguments and critique the reasoning of others, numbers and operations in fractions, and operations and algebraic thinking. The portfolio then contains samples of student work. Teacher’s feedback on one stated, “Strong use of models (#lines) and unit fractions. Next time: Always explain your thinking like you did here—➔.” In grade two, the ELA portfolio has these areas of focus: anchor standards, text types and purposes, research to build and present knowledge, and responding to literature. One sample of teacher feedback in a non-fiction informational published piece stated, “Lots of details” as a plus, with, “Using connecting words” as a next step. Another example, from a running record assessment, stated, “Solving tricky words” as a plus with “Pay attention to endings” as a next step.

- In reading, running records data are analyzed by teachers, teams, and administration. Student reading data are used to match readers to appropriate texts, to create small group schedules, and to impact whole group and small group teaching points, so that the content is relevant to the needs, skills, and reading behaviors of all students. Results from the 2017 ELA NYS assessment resulted in the school adopting close reading with specific lenses for grades three through five to increase both the ability and access to grade level reading material. An analysis of the running record data for the kindergarten through grade five students showed a decrease of 22 percentage points in performance at Level 1 from September 2017 to March 2018, from 49 percent to 27 percent. There was also an increase in Level 3 and 4 readers, from 16 percent in September to 42 percent in March, an increase of 26 percentage points. Teachers use on-demand assessments to launch units and determine areas of focus for each unit for the class and for groups of students in the class. Teachers analyze data from EngageNY pre-, mid-, and end-of-module assessments and Early Childhood Assessments in Mathematics (ECAM) to adjust instruction in pacing calendars and to plan for fluency activities and 5 Practices lessons.
**Findings**

School leaders consistently communicate high expectations to the entire staff through the staff handbook, weekly newsletters, and classroom observations with feedback. Teacher teams establish a culture for learning that systematically communicates high expectations for all students.

**Impact**

There is a culture of mutual accountability to support student progress by providing clear, focused, and effective feedback that prepares students for their next level.

**Supporting Evidence**

- The staff handbook elaborates on expectations for classroom management, instruction, and professional responsibilities. The weekly newsletter, the *Educator's Newsletter*, is written by the principal and contains information on important dates and deadlines as well as weekly professional development (PD). The newsletter also provides guidance to help teachers focus on instructional alignment with the Common Core Learning Standards, especially the power standards (those most likely to appear on the NYS tests in the spring). Monthly attendance rates by individual classrooms are also published. Teachers reported that a mid-year survey from school leadership is a check-in to help them keep track of mutual accountability to meet expectations and allows teachers to offer feedback on their progress to date. Both administrators and teachers stated that feedback is taken very seriously by school leaders and by teachers, helping them understand how well the staff is doing and incorporating suggestions for next steps. Grade representatives attend grade leader meetings and report challenges and celebrations in meeting expectations to school leaders and coaches and other grade level representatives. As a result, the culture is one of openness and mutual support, as voiced by school leadership and staff.

- The administrative team has set clear expectations and goals for the year for cycles of professional development (PD) that are grounded in the *Danielson Framework for Teaching*. These include, in ELA, "Together we will strengthen our practices in planning and preparing our reading units (1a and 1e), and in mathematics, "We will strengthen our planning for math modules. (1a and 1e)." Professional development included a series of sessions on 5 Practices, a newly adopted math approach for grades two through five, number talks with kindergarten and grade one, a Lesson Study format for 5 Practices, close reading for grades two through five, analyzing student work, incorporating high-quality student discussions using strategic questioning and facilitation techniques, and team planning for the Teachers College Reading and Writing Program (TCRWP) curriculum. Teachers are held accountable through instructional walkthroughs, the observation process, and the initial planning meeting. Mutual accountability is attained through teacher-promoted peer intervisitation, Lesson Study protocols, and showcases of teacher best practices that align to the Danielson *Framework for Teaching*.

- Academic expectations are communicated to students through goal sheets, written feedback, and verbal feedback. In reading and writing, teachers use the TCRWP’s learning progressions to guide feedback given. This allows teachers to communicate to students what they have mastered and what they need to continue working on. Teachers also give written and verbal feedback based on the results of running records and their use of rubrics to grade writing. Teachers communicate with students and their families to support students’ progress as they prepare for the next grade through ongoing conversations about student work and goals. Articulation cards are used to share critical information about students as they move through their years at Grant Avenue. There is an annual Career Day and a series of field trip opportunities, allowing students to explore different career opportunities for the future. In addition, the school had Core Values that guide students with social and emotional learning, with a dedicated value featured each month.
Additional Finding

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

Findings

The majority of teachers participate in professional collaborative inquiry teams. Teachers consistently analyze assessment data in various forms and student work using rubrics during collaborative grade level and inquiry team meetings.

Impact

Through team collaboration, teachers’ instructional capacity and pedagogy have strengthened, and progress toward goals for groups of students has improved, as evidenced through the improvement in pre- and post-writing assessments, math checklists, student self-assessments, and teacher reflections.

Supporting Evidence

- Teacher inquiry teams meet twice weekly as grade level teams during common meeting time with a literacy or math focus. The grade three teacher inquiry team’s goal for the observed session was norming State-provided exemplary responses to exam questions and looking at the needs of students on short response essays. The team examined the State rubric and exemplars and then looked at their own students’ work, rated Levels 1 through 4. Their noticing included that the students who scored at level 1 answered questions with their own interpretations of the questions, without having evidence to support answers, while the 2s had answers with connected evidence. The resulting insights led to their next steps, that teachers should model better answers and clarify the process of understanding how a section of the text leads to understanding the whole work. They decided that a strategy to try out with students would be to have them do a quick retelling after each paragraph and then connect the gist of each paragraph into a cohesive correlation.

- One of the school Comprehensive Educational Plan goals focuses on team collaborations, particularly in the area of the Common Core-aligned rigorous math curriculum, with a mathematical discussions approach. The goal states that all teaching teams will engage in fifteen 70-minute Monday planning sessions and two cycles of Lesson Study of 5 Practices, a workshop-inspired math approach. This articulation is across all grade levels and is paired with a commitment that, by June 2018, all teachers will have worked with grade specific inquiry teams to analyze collaboratively student work and instructional practices to improve student math performance. Last school year, school leadership initiated many of the improvements in math by doubling the math time per day and beginning the implementation of 5 Practices. Student math improvement on 2017 NYS math assessments for grades three through five showed growth in the number of students scoring at Levels 3 and 4, from 11.9 percent in 2016 to 30.9 percent in 2017, an increase of 19 percentage points.

- Teacher grade level teams analyze student data regularly in order to select students for small instructional groupings, additional academic support, and guided reading. They also use these analyses to assess the progress students make overall as a result of instructional decisions and to determine whether curricula needs to be realigned or adjusted in a more informed way. Student data from iReady assessments, administered in September 2017, January 2018, and again in March 2018, showed a steady decrease in the number of students tested in grades one through five who scored at level 1, from 49 percent to 27 percent, a decline of 22 percentage points. Moreover, the number of students at Levels 3 and 4 grew from 16 percent in September to 42 percent in March, an increase of 26 percentage points. Teachers’ Advance ratings also showed improvement this year in Domain 3: Instruction. Consequently, there has been growth in teacher practice and in student progress towards goals.