Quality Review Report

2018-2019

P.S. 153 Homecrest
Elementary 21K153
1970 Homecrest Avenue
Brooklyn
NY 11229

Principal: Carl Santa Maria

Dates of Review:
March 20, 2019 - March 21, 2019

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

School Quality Ratings

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Instructional Core</th>
<th>Area</th>
<th>Rating</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>To what extent does the school...</strong></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>Area of Focus</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>Additional Finding</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>
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## School Culture

*To what extent does the school...*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Area</th>
<th>Rating</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1.4</td>
<td>Maintain a culture of mutual trust and positive attitudes that supports the academic and personal growth of students and adults</td>
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<tr>
<td>3.4</td>
<td>Establish a culture for learning that communicates high expectations to staff, students and families, and provide supports to achieve those expectations</td>
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## 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</td>
<td>Make strategic organizational decisions to support the school’s instructional goals and meet student learning needs, as evidenced by meaningful student work products</td>
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<tr>
<td>3.1</td>
<td>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>
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<tr>
<td>4.1</td>
<td>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>
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<tr>
<td>4.2</td>
<td>Engage in structured professional collaborations on teams using an inquiry approach that promotes shared leadership and focuses on improved student learning</td>
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<tr>
<td>5.1</td>
<td>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>
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## Area of Celebration

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

The majority of teachers are engaged in inquiry-based, structured professional collaborations that promote a schoolwide writing initiative and consistently analyze student work. Distributed leadership structures, such as grade leader team and teacher-led committees, are in place throughout the school community.

### Impact

Teacher teams’ analysis of student work results in improved pedagogical practices, and there are opportunities for teachers to have a voice in schoolwide decisions that impact student learning.

### Supporting Evidence

- From kindergarten to grade five, teacher teams meet during grade-specific, common planning periods to engage in inquiry-based work centered on the schoolwide writing initiative. Each group has an established goal specific to the needs of their respective grade levels. For example, the grade five team is striving to ensure that fifty percent of their students become proficient in writing opinion essays by June 2019, using the Teachers College writing curriculum. The goals of these teams are established in partnership with the school leaders, and progress towards meeting each team’s objective is monitored over the course of the school year. In addition, grade level collaborations strengthen teachers’ ability to meet the expectations of the Common Core instructional shifts. For example, the grade three team met to review the results of a mathematics quiz and noticed that most of the students struggled with single digit addition. As a result, the team decided to reteach the concept to students. Teachers also noted that some students were still using their fingers to count and created center-based activities to address the lack of fluency being demonstrated the students. Thus, professional collaborations are helping teachers achieve school goals and building their instructional capacity.

- During an observation of the grade four team, the group used the Norms for Learning from Student Work protocol to analyze samples of student work related to multi-step math problems. A team member served as a facilitator to ensure norms were upheld and the inquiry work was completed with fidelity. One teacher presented low, middle, and high-level samples of student work to the team while they listened and took low-inference notes on the pieces. There was also a one-minute wrap-up conducted at the end each presentation about the documents. Overall, the team noticed that a majority of the students understand the relationship between fractions and decimals and are able to represent them in their constructed responses. At the end of the meeting, the team collaboratively created a list of possible instructional next steps, which included the formation of strategic flexible grouping assignments and an exploration of ways to extend organization skills into mathematics. The team members indicated that this collaboration has improved their teaching practices. One teacher stated, “This group helps me with planning. It provides me with resources for guided math.”

- School leaders encourage teachers to participate in teams and committees that support student learning. In addition to grade-level teacher teams, teams such as the vertical team, continuous learning team, and the professional development (PD) committee provide opportunities for teacher voice in schoolwide decisions. For example, vertical team members serve as liaisons between the leaders and their respective grades, working collaboratively to foster curriculum alignment. This year, the team is conducting a yearlong study on student writing to identify which curriculum is a better suited to serve the needs of the entire school community. Kindergarten and grades one and five are following one literacy curriculum while grades two, three, and four are adhering to another. The team has been tracking patterns and trends across grade levels so that leaders can make an informed decision about which the curriculum to choose.
Area of Focus

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

The emphasis on rigorous habits and higher order skills for all is inconsistent in curricula across grade levels and content areas. Although unit and lesson plans include graphic organizers to make curricula and academic tasks accessible, there is limited evidence to support that curricula and tasks are planned and refined using student work data so that a diversity of learners are cognitively engaged.

Impact

Across grade levels and content areas, school curricular documents reveal inconsistent practices of planning and revision to ensure rigorous habits and cognitive engagement for all, including English Language Learners (ELLs) and students with disabilities.

Supporting Evidence

- The social studies department created a fifth-grade unit centered on American politics that emphasized rigorous habits for all students, including ELLs and students with disabilities. Over the course of the unit, students were required to create a political party and develop a platform. Students were also required to consider which political party they would join and explain the rationales behind their decisions. The unit incorporated historical videos, photos, and primary and secondary documents as well as graphic organizers designed to support students in acquiring the content knowledge of the unit. However, this level of planning is inconsistent across grades and content areas. For example, a review of a fourth-grade social studies unit on complex societies requiring students to conduct research revealed limited evidence of targeted scaffolds and supports to ensure rigorous habits for all.

- While some lesson plans reflect planning to provide access to some students, there is limited evidence of the use of student data to refine curricular materials to ensure cognitive engagement for all. For example, a kindergarten social studies unit provided for four groups and included targeted supports and scaffolds, like the inclusion of a video, writing stems, or sentence starters, to address the needs of specific learners. In another example, a first-grade math lesson plan included tasks for specific groups of students according to level low, level on, level, and high level. The groupings were pre-determined by student performance on a previous day’s exit slip. However, a second-grade math plan provided minimal evidence of accommodations for learners who required differentiated materials or scaffolds. Similarly, a grade two integrated co-teacher (ICT) science lesson lacked supports for a class with a wide array of learners.

- Although there is a schoolwide expectation that curriculum be cognitively accessible to all learners, this practice is not yet fully reflected in all curricula documents. Consequently, while a grade five math unit plan includes a list of lessons, a sidebar with specific strategies for ELLs, Response to Intervention (Rti) options, and a list possible enrichment tasks, this practice was not reflected in lessons and units across the school. For example, a grade two English Language Arts (ELA) curriculum map emphasized a variety of instructional components, such as an anchor text, targeted comprehension skills and strategies, grammar skills, and writing focus traits, but it did not included any accommodations for students who may require support in accessing the reading materials. Additionally, a first-grade literacy document spotlighted the required texts, foundational skills, and speaking, listening, language development, and writing skills required across the unit. However, there was no evidence of any refinements in the unit to ensure engagement and accessibility for the lowest and highest achieving students. Although, school leaders were able to present evidence of student data analysis, half of the unit plans collected during the school visit lacked evidence of this information being used to ensure the cognitive engagement of students, including ELLs and students with disabilities.
Additional Finding

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<th>Quality Indicator:</th>
<th>1.2 Pedagogy</th>
<th>Rating:</th>
<th>Proficient</th>
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Findings

Across classrooms, teacher pedagogy is developed from a coherent set of beliefs that students learn best when lessons include interactive, hands-on activities and provide opportunities for student discussion. The schoolwide focus on center-based learning enhanced with technology integration provides multiple entry points into the curricula.

Impact

Teacher pedagogy is aligned to shared beliefs. Instruction is executed using teaching strategies that consistently provide opportunities for a variety of learners, including ELLs and student with disabilities, to demonstrate higher-order thinking skills.

Supporting Evidence

- In a grade two science ICT class, students were tasked with making glue for the school. Prior to creating the substance, students observed and recorded properties associated with two samples of store-bought glue, drawing conclusions about the similarities and difference between the two samples. In a third-grade math class, the teacher provided students with math boards, fraction cubes, and fraction charts to help reinforce their understanding of fractional parts. Additionally, in a first-grade math ICT classroom, students were studying measurement and data. Students were provided with multiple paperclips to measure items around the classroom. They laid the paperclips next to each item from end to end and recorded their findings. Students were fully engaged and appeared to enjoy learning how to measure length in this way in lieu of using a ruler with inches or centimeters. The inclusion of these interactive activities helped provide a deeper understanding of the concepts being taught and supported student learning.

- Across most classrooms, one common pedagogical strategy used to provide students with opportunities for discussion is turn and talk. This practice allows students to further explore an idea and share their thinking with peers while teachers listen and assess student learning. In a fifth-grade math class, students were classifying and comparing quadrilaterals. The teacher asked the class, “What are the attributes and properties of a quadrilateral? and “Is a parallelogram the same as a trapezoid?” Students were directed to turn and talk as the teacher circulated the classroom and monitored their conversations. The teacher jotted down the names of the students who had challenges articulating the specific properties. Likewise, in a kindergarten classroom, students exploring the roles of community helpers were given pictures, books, and tools related to such roles as a firefighter, a farmer, and a police chief. The teacher directed students to turn and talk with their peers about the importance of community helpers to a neighborhood. Finally, in a fifth-grade social studies class, students were provided with multiple opportunities to turn and talk about their political views.

- The schoolwide initiative to create center-based learning comprised of multiple small groups infused with technology was launched to meet the academic needs of a variety of learners and to provide multiple entry points. For example, in a fourth grade ICT ELA class, students were placed into stations and worked on activities focused on the anchor text, The Earth Dragon Awakes. Each station had a task that supported a specific reading comprehension skill, such as making inferences, sequencing, and practicing fluency, with a final station designated for individualized instruction using literacy-based software. In a fourth-grade social studies classroom, the teacher assigned groups to work at specific stations to complete their research projects. These stations were equipped with resources such as computers, books, articles, and a DOK question sheet to ensure all learners were able to complete the task.
Additional Finding

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

Ongoing common assessments are administered across grade levels, and results have formed the basis of data discussions between school leaders and teachers. Teachers’ practices include in-the-moment assessment and on-going clipboard assessment tracking.

Impact

A variety of student assessment data is readily available to school leaders and faculty, and these data sets are used in making decisions relative to instruction. Teachers conduct checks for understanding during lessons and make-adjustments accordingly.

Supporting Evidence

- Teachers administer curricular-aligned common assessments in reading, writing, and math. The results of these exams are recorded in a central location and monitored by school leaders. There is evidence of administrators reviewing and analyzing data to identify students in need of academic intervention. For example, school leaders reviewed a midyear math exam and provided teachers with a list of targeted small group configurations by standard. School leaders also use common assessment data to chart progress being made by students within designated subgroups. For instance, ELLs are tracked by grade level to see if they are making gains in reading. According to a recent benchmark, the students who participated in a literacy-based afterschool program demonstrated an increase of two reading levels on their running records between fall and spring.

- School leaders facilitate discussions on student progress with each teacher, centered on their class’ performance on common assessments and a review of selected student work products. The purpose of these discussions is to monitor student growth and recommend adjustments to classroom instruction. There is a transparent process in place to support these conversations, with an emphasis on tracking pre- and post-assessment performance data in math, reading, and writing. Teachers are responsible for administering the exam, identifying trends, and entering the results into the central drive within a 6-8 week learning cycle. School leaders then go into the drive, review the teacher findings, and provide feedback which include next steps for instruction. For example, a third-grade teacher was given feedback that celebrated student growth, with eighty percent approaching proficiency on a chapter 3 mathematics unit, as well as tips for small group instruction. Another teacher’s feedback included links to online resources providing guidance in supporting students who are still struggling to meet the benchmarks.

- Across most classrooms, teachers conference with groups of students and adjust daily lesson accordingly. Teacher regularly use formative assessments, such as checklists and clipboard assessment tracking. In a grade five math class, the teacher monitored student conversations during a turn-and-talk and readjusted her questions to students based on her notes. In a grade two literacy class, the teacher used a clipboard to take notes on students, planning next steps for students based on these. In third grade math class, the teacher circulated among students and noticed some misconceptions. The teacher then incorporated additional modeling into her guided practice to ensure students understood the concept. Finally, a first-grade teacher circulated and monitored students using a “Checking for Understanding” worksheet that classified student performance as either met, partially met, or did not meet. The teacher used this information to earmark specific students to participate in small instructional groups. Consequently, teachers’ assessment practices are consistently used to make adjustments to lessons to meet the needs of all learners.
Additional Finding

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

School leaders consistently communicate high expectations to faculty using staff handbooks, daily memos, and training. School leaders and faculty provide parents with access to resources and workshops that support student success.

Impact

School leaders’ have established a system of accountability supported by clear expectations, providing professional learning (PL) for staff and on-going parent outreach that supports student achievement.

Supporting Evidence

- In September, school leaders met with staff and reviewed the PowerPoint “Principal’s Everyday Expectations and Schoolwide Initiatives.” During this presentation, school leaders identified the challenges facing the school, the instructional expectations for the year, and the creation of learning centers to support those challenges. Moreover, teachers were given both an electronic and a hard copy of the faculty handbook that reiterates schoolwide expectations. School leaders also distribute a daily memo informing the entire staff of school events and ongoing initiatives. For example, one memo discussed expectations for the mid-year conferences with the principal and provided specific deadlines for running records. Teachers noted the value of these memos, which keep them abreast of the daily expectations of the school community. In a teacher meeting, a participant shared that school leaders reinforce their expectations for staff on an ongoing basis through emails, informal conversations, and staff meetings.

- PL is designed to ensure that staff is supported in meeting the expectations laid out by school leaders and strengthening teacher content and pedagogical knowledge. Teachers receive a PL calendar at the beginning of the year indicating the sessions offered. Internal workshops have focused on topics which include fluency, miscue analysis, triangulating curriculum, ELLs, Word study, differentiation, utilizing i-Ready data effectively, and unpacking the new science curriculum, Amplify. Additionally, teachers attend external workshops and receive individualized support from administrators based on their personal needs. For example, a teacher stated that school leaders coordinated an intervisitation at another school based on her request for additional support with special education instructional practices. Thus, training is provided by school leaders to the entire staff to ensure that expectations are met.

- The faculty provides structures that support parents in helping their children meet the academic expectations of the school. At the beginning of the year, parents are given a survey eliciting their opinions on workshops that would address their needs. In October, there was a parent engagement calendar created based on the survey results. The sessions were facilitated by various members of staff, including the parent coordinator, teachers, and administrators. Some of the workshop topics included Internet safety, the grade five middle school application process, developing positive school routines, preparation for the math and ELA exams, strategies for ELLs, and reading at home with a child. At the end of each workshop, parents are given a survey asking for feedback on the content and engagement level of the workshop. Parent are also given a handbook that informs them of the about the school’s curriculum and assessment policy. Teachers and staff hosted a well-attended Meet your Teacher family night to further review the handbook. Parents are also supplied with monthly newsletters across grade levels containing information on upcoming events and classroom news from each content area, such as writing, math, science, and social studies.
Additional Finding

<table>
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<tr>
<th>Quality Indicator:</th>
<th>4.1 Teacher Support and Supervision</th>
<th>Rating:</th>
<th>Proficient</th>
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Findings

School leaders provide feedback to teachers that accurately captures strengths, challenges, and next steps. School leaders have a system that uses teacher observation data to effectively design and facilitate PD for all.

Impact

Feedback in observation reports includes clear expectations for teacher practice and supports teacher development. School leaders are making informed decisions to implement strategies that promote professional growth and improved teacher performance.

Supporting Evidence

- School leaders conduct on-going classroom observations, and the feedback provided to teachers is aligned to the Danielson Framework for Teaching. Next steps offer suggestions for improvement in pedagogy. Feedback included in observation reports revealed a recommendation for teacher intervisitation, an excerpt from an educational article about how to improve discussion techniques, and tips on how to increase accountability among students and their peers. Clear expectations are also articulated. For example, one observation report states, “Use more open-ended questions to invite students to think more deeply about the content and use of data for grouping.” Another report indicated that the “teacher stated that she felt reluctant to stop and begin a new strategy mid-lesson even when they felt the desired strategy wasn’t working.” The school leader’s feedback was that teachers should constantly take the pulse of a class through monitoring student understanding and engagement. This should determine whether to use or discontinue use of a strategy.

- PD topics are derived from trends identified across classroom observations. School leaders have an observation tracking sheet that lists completed observations and next steps. School leaders also create individualized professional plans for new and untenured teachers to help guide them in their professional growth. The plan includes action steps for areas of targeted professional development, such as intervisitation of teachers rated highly effective or effective, self-assessment and reflection opportunities, peer coaching by another teacher on the grade, mentoring, check-ins, adequate resources, and professional learning supports. The plan is revisited with the teacher after each observation cycle.

- At the beginning of the year, school leaders met individually with each teacher. During their meetings, they reviewed the goals from the prior school year, discussed the past year’s overall evaluation score, and collaboratively created new annual goals. In addition to setting new targets, teachers and administrators discussed student data and the professional learning necessary to help support them in meeting their objectives. For example, a teacher selected goals concentrated on increasing student engagement and deepening her content knowledge. Based on these goals, the teacher was then enrolled in a district level PD on ICT classrooms that had an emphasis on engagement. In January, teachers are given feedback on the status of their personal goals as well as the progress being made by their students, based on an analysis of observation reports and student work products. In another example, a teacher selected goals centered on assessment during instruction. The teacher was provided with detailed feedback from school leaders following each observation. After three observations, the teacher met her goal and experienced additional PL supporting her interest in learning about the new science curriculum. Thus, school leaders effectively link observation data and PL to promote teachers’ professional growth.