Quality Review Report

2018-2019

P.S. 215 Morris H. Weiss
Elementary 21K215
415 Avenue S
Brooklyn
NY 11223

Principal: Antonella Bove

Dates of Review:
May 8, 2019 - May 9, 2019

Lead Reviewer: Adam Breier
The Quality Review Report

The Quality Review is a two-day school visit by an experienced educator. During the review, the reviewer visits classrooms, talks with parents, students, teachers, and school leaders and uses a rubric to evaluate how well the school is organized to support student achievement.

The Quality Review Report provides a rating for all ten indicators of the Quality Review Rubric in three categories: Instructional Core, School Culture, and Systems for Improvement. One indicator is identified as the Area of Celebration to highlight an area in which the school does well to support student learning and achievement. One indicator is identified as the Area of Focus to highlight an area the school should work on to support student learning and achievement. The remaining indicators are identified as Additional Finding. This report presents written findings, impact, and site-specific supporting evidence for six indicators.

Information about the School


School Quality Ratings

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Instructional Core</th>
<th>Area</th>
<th>Rating</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>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>Well Developed</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 Celebration</td>
<td>Well Developed</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>Well Developed</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
## School Culture

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>To what extent does the school...</th>
<th>Area</th>
<th>Rating</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1.4 Maintain a culture of mutual trust and positive attitudes that supports the academic and personal growth of students and adults</td>
<td>Area of Focus</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>Well Developed</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>Well Developed</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>Well Developed</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4.1 Observe teachers using the Danielson Framework for Teaching along with the analysis of learning outcomes to elevate school-wide instructional practices and implement strategies that promote professional growth and reflection</td>
<td>Additional Finding</td>
<td>Proficient</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4.2 Engage in structured professional collaborations on teams using an inquiry approach that promotes shared leadership and focuses on improved student learning</td>
<td>Additional Finding</td>
<td>Well Developed</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

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Quality Indicator:</th>
<th>1.2 Pedagogy</th>
<th>Rating:</th>
<th>Well Developed</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>

Findings
Across the vast majority of classrooms, teaching practices are aligned to the curricula and reflect an articulated set of beliefs about how students learn best that is informed by the Danielson Framework for Teaching. Across these same classrooms, student work products and discussions reflect high levels of student thinking, participation, and ownership.

Impact
The shared belief among staff that students learn best when they are engaged in lessons that are differentiated based on students’ learning styles is evident in teaching practice in all visited classrooms. Additionally, all learners are engaged in appropriately challenging tasks and demonstrate higher-order thinking skills in student work products.

Supporting Evidence

- Students were engaged in differentiated tasks based on learning styles during all visited classes. In a grade-five English Language Arts (ELA) class, students were analyzing how visual elements contribute to the meaning and tone of myths. Visual learners read about Odysseus on a storyboard and added to the story by inserting their original artwork. Linguistic learners read a myth about Phaethon and analyzed it through peer-to-peer discussions. Students in a grade-four class were learning about the water cycle through tasks geared toward their strongest learning style. Two examples of these tasks included visual learners drawing each phase of the water cycle and auditory learners composing a song that described the water cycle. Similarly, second-grade students studied the different landforms and kindergarten students focused on the various tasks that take place, and different animals that live on a farm, while first-grade students were learning about the properties of sound through learning-style-based activities.

- Across all grades and subjects, students worked cooperatively and engaged each other in challenging conversations. During a grade-two math lesson, students talked with their partners about measurement and then worked together to measure different objects in centimeters. In another class, second-grade students used sentence starters to engage in discussions within their table groups about the characteristics of different landforms and their differences and similarities. Third-grade students played a game with partners that challenged them to determine red-squirrel survival rates in two different environments. Within table groups, first-grade students used a sample family tree to determine each person's appropriate adjective and to then create a family tree of their own. Other groups in this class used a graphic organizer to write the different adjectives that described their character traits and then discussed their work with partners. Additionally, fifth-grade students who had drawn their own pictures to add to a storyboard of a Greek myth answered peer's questions about how their drawing added to the myth.

- Additionally, across all grades and subjects, students exhibited ownership over their learning. For example, grade-two students parsed the lesson's learning objective into statements that they then rewrote in student-friendly language, showing ownership of the learning process. All station-learning activities, observed in use in the vast majority of classes that were visited, included a detailed instruction sheet with the questions and prompts that each group should focus on during the lesson. One student praised these task sheets as valuable when he shared, “These sheets are great because we can just take charge of the work.” Similarly, each task sheet included differentiated questions and activities that students who met the goals of the lesson could then address in order to extend their learning.
Area of Focus

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

Findings

School leaders, a guidance counselor, a support team, and an attendance committee ensure that all students are known well by at least one adult who coordinates supports. The school community aligns activities such as clubs and workshops that contribute to social-emotional supports for students.

Impact

Academic and attendance supports are provided to the students and are personalized in response to those who may demonstrate a need for intervention. However, the impact of fifth-grade clubs, and staff professional development (PD) on crisis intervention and prevention is limited by the select number of participants.

Supporting Evidence

- A guidance counselor ensures that students’ social-emotional needs are met. The attendance committee monitors student attendance and conducts outreach when students are out of school. A support team that consists of school leaders, the guidance counselor, and school psychologist monitors students’ behavioral and social-emotional needs. Students reported feeling supported by school leaders, individual teachers, and the guidance counselor and all responded positively to a question about whether or not they are known well by at least one adult in the school. However, there was also consensus over the lack of a structure within which they were provided with personalized attendance supports or activities designed to foster social-emotional learning.

- Parent workshops are aligned with the supports for students that have been provided by the guidance counselor, who has presented to individual classes to promote students’ adoption of positive academic and social behaviors. Parent workshop topics have included academic supports, the use of the online platforms, including a gradebook, online library, and assessment-tracking system. In addition, workshops on conflict resolution, using positive behavioral-change strategies, introduction to the common assessment platform used across the school, setting academic and personal goals for children, and planning for healthy eating have also been conducted. Parent enrichment activities held on Saturdays have focused on families working together to cook and create visual and ceramic art.

- Clubs are available after school every Friday during which students are guided through activities that foster their cooperation with one another in self-selected groups such as cooking, basketball, robotics, technology, and photography. However, these after-school clubs are available to grade-five students only, with no similar program available to students in grades kindergarten-through-four. Six of the school’s teachers are trained in the Therapeutic Crisis Intervention for Schools (TCIS) process for crisis intervention and prevention. However, training in similar or other structures that empowers teachers to address students in need of social-emotional support has not been provided.
Findings
Curricula are aligned to the Common Core Learning Standards and strategically integrate the instructional shifts. Curricula and academic tasks are planned and refined using student work and data.

Impact
Coherent curricula across grades and subjects include strategic integration of the instructional shifts related to the citation of text-based evidence as well as having students apply math concepts to real-world situations. All students have access to the curricula and are cognitively engaged through differentiated groupings and assignments.

Supporting Evidence

- All curricular materials are aligned to the Common Core and show evidence of strategic integration of the instructional shifts. Integration of the shift in ELA that supports students’ ability to defend their arguments with textual evidence can be seen across a vast majority of lesson plans. Some examples include a science lesson plan in which students would be required to justify their claim about which environment would be best to support a population of red squirrels. A grade-five ELA lesson plan indicates that students will need to explain how their drawings extended the Greek myth to which they were assigned, connecting their addition to the established facts. Additionally, a focus on academic vocabulary was present in all collected planning materials.

- A grade-five math lesson plan indicates that students are to apply their knowledge of volume to real-world problems through the lens of an architect. Additionally, students are to determine what other careers might need to make practical use of volume determinations and explain each step of the process in determining the volume of an object. A grade-two lesson plan includes an activity in which students are to apply their knowledge of measurement and estimation in determining the size of various landforms. Similar to lesson plans in ELA and social studies, all science and math lesson plans include a focus on the academic vocabulary students would need to successfully complete the lesson.

- A review of curricular documents and academic tasks evidences the planning and modification of instruction to meet all students’ needs. For example, a grade-five lesson plan indicates that student groups would be based on math scores and that each group assignment would include a “Dig Deeper” question so that the highest achieving students would have extensions of learning. A grade-two Integrated Co-Teaching (ICT) science lesson plan includes scaffolds provided for English Language Learners (ELLs) and students with disabilities, including sentence starters, anchor charts, a vocabulary tower, and a pyramid shaped display as a visual tool for each group that includes academic vocabulary and home-language synonyms. Additionally, vocabulary towers are included in the planning materials for classes across the vast majority of grades and content areas. Other examples of planning so that all students could have access to the curricula include student groups based on data, ELL student partnerships based on English language acquisition levels, scaffolded materials, differentiated graphic organizers, and online tutorials available for viewing using laptops with headphones.
### Additional Finding

**Quality Indicator:** 2.2 Assessment  
**Rating:** Well Developed

#### Findings

Across the vast majority of classrooms, teachers use or create assessments, rubrics, and grading policies that are aligned with the school’s curricula and offer a clear portrait of student mastery. In addition, teachers’ practices consistently reflect the varied use of ongoing checks for understanding and student self-assessment.

#### Impact

High quality assessment practices provide actionable and meaningful feedback to students and teachers regarding student achievement. Teachers’ assessment practices result in effective adjustments during classroom instruction and in modifications to subsequent lessons that meet all students’ needs and enable them to be aware of their next learning steps.

#### Supporting Evidence

- Across the school, multiple examples of teachers’ feedback to students show clear portraits of student mastery and feedback to students that they can use for increased achievement. For example, feedback offered to students on ELA assignments reminded them to support their claims with additional text-based evidence, offer additional details in descriptive writings, use correct punctuation, spelling, and grammar, and to close essays with a summarizing statement. Feedback on math assignments reminded students of the value of using multiple methods to find an answer, describe the processes taken in solving problems, and to double check answers and ensure that they are correct. Additionally, other examples of feedback from assignments across all content areas draw students’ attention to the importance of ending sentences with a period, making sure that the first word of each sentence begins with a capital letter, re-reading written assignments prior to turning them in to check for grammar and mechanics, as well as ensuring that claims are completely supported by text-based details.

- Students came to a quick consensus when reporting on the value of their teachers’ written feedback and their use of that feedback to improve their learning. One student reported that his teacher advised him to add more dialogue to his characters and to make sure that “what they [his characters] say adds to the story” in his writings. This student also added that he always makes sure to write in this way now. Another student discussed feedback from a teacher that reminded the student to only include information that will help prove her claim in her writing. This student further stated, “I started to remove useless information in my draft. My teacher also taught me to search for new words and use them. My drafts have become so much better!”

- Across most classrooms, there was evidence that teachers are assessing students’ learning and making adjustments to instruction when necessary. During a grade-five ELA lesson, the teacher took detailed notes about which students needed to be reminded to use a checklist, were on track to meet the unit goals, and adjustments to the lesson for the next day. A grade-two teacher noticed that students within the auditory-learning group had misunderstood the task and paused their work to reteach the lesson. During a grade-one social studies lesson, when a group struggled to identify the character traits, the teacher drew their attention to an anchor chart and reviewed it with them. Additionally, the station assignments in multiple classes contained self-assessments that students would conduct at the end of the lesson. Additionally, the sheets that teachers used to record their noticings while checking students’ understanding were all structured so that noticings would be organized by the schoolwide focus on multiple learning styles.
Findings
School leaders consistently communicate high expectations and provide training to the entire staff. School leaders and staff effectively communicate expectations connected to a path to college and career readiness with families.

Impact
A culture of mutual accountability exists around teachers' support of each other in ensuring that teacher-team meetings and information sharing protocols are effective. Information sharing and successful partnering with families through online platforms and sessions support students in their academic progress toward those expectations.

Supporting Evidence

- High expectations are shared with staff through presentations at faculty meetings and through a variety of tools and platforms, including emails, memoranda, weekly PD sessions, and a faculty handbook. Among the high expectations shared in the handbook are instructional design and delivery for content specific and interdisciplinary lessons, maintenance of student portfolios, homework, progress report, and grading policies, along with standards for daily school operations and maintenance of student safety. The school community’s culture of mutual accountability is evident in teachers’ reliance on their colleagues to arrive at teacher-team meetings prepared to engage in data analysis, inquiry of student work, and review of the different strategies that teachers use to address students’ various needs. All teacher-team meetings are teacher facilitated and always end with an assignment of tasks for which all participants are responsible.

- High expectations are shared with families through multiple tools, such as the Backpack News monthly newsletter, a smartphone app, email, text messages, individual and group phone calls, and the school's website. Workshops have also been central to the school's process for sharing high expectations with families. Workshops have been delivered covering topics such as improving students' reading, the middle-school application process, and resources available for parents to use in supporting their ELLs and students with disabilities. Parents praised the Backpack News format, reporting, “They break down what the students are doing in each subject so that we always know ahead of time and can be ready to help our kids.” Parents also shared their appreciation for the school's use of an online library, empowering them to focus on strengthening their children’s literacy. Students’ progress reports are regularly shared with students and parents, accompanied by the resources that parents can access from home in order to work with their children on identified areas for growth. One parent shared, “For my daughter, the teacher directed me to a website and gave me the tools I needed to work with her at home and she has improved so much!” Another parent shared that because of a conversation with her child’s teacher, she accesses an online academic resource program weekly and has also seen improvement in her child’s grades.

- Evidence of the partnership that has been established between the school and parents can also be seen in the use of surveys. Parent responses on surveys led to an increase in parent participation in, and facilitation of, workshops on cooking foods from different cultures and the scheduling of events to occur adjacent to Parent-Teacher Association meetings. Additionally, parents indicated that they want workshops on homework, test-taking, and stress-minimizing strategies. Other requested topics include computer-coding and strategies for managing children’s transition from pre-k to kindergarten.
Additional Finding

Quality Indicator: 4.2 Teacher Teams and Leadership Development
Rating: Well Developed

Findings

All teachers are engaged in teams that consistently analyze student work in cycles of inquiry that reveal targeted areas of student need and actively address them in their work toward fulfilling the school’s goals. Teachers are empowered to positively affect student learning through service as content-team leaders.

Impact

Collaborations within horizontal grade teams and the vertical inquiry team strengthen teachers’ instructional capacity and schoolwide instructional coherence while data show increases in student achievement. Across the school, within a variety of team structures, teachers build leadership capacity and have a voice in key decisions that affect student learning.

Supporting Evidence

- The grade-five horizontal teacher team met to review four students’ responses to a 3-point math sample State test question. The question required students to find the total amount, in cups, of dry goods that could be stored in three different-sized containers. Teachers discussed aspects of the students’ work that were interesting or surprising, how the students thought through the question, the processes students used to see and learn, and next steps teachers should take to improve students’ progress. One teacher recorded the noticings, interpretations, and implications for each of the four student-work samples. Teachers also discussed as possible next steps that they should provide students with a problem-solving plan, place anchor charts on students’ desks, color-code problems for visual learners, embed turn-and-talk discussion questions so that students could discuss with their partners the steps they would need to take before attempting to solve problems, and increase teacher modeling. Teachers also agreed to implement the next steps they had recommended and report on the results of their implementation at the next team meeting.

- All grade-based horizontal teacher teams are conducting the same inquiry-based work throughout the school year. One teacher reported, and all present agreed, "We are always discussing what worked and how it helped students.” Other teachers discussed their common use of scaffolding tools, such as sentence starters, word towers for ELLs, and story–map graphic organizers. The focus on supporting ELLs and students with disabilities has led to increased progress for those students across grades, as shown by common assessment data.

- Teachers serve as leaders of grade-based horizontal teacher teams. Each horizontal-team leader also serves on the vertical planning team, which has made decisions in response to teachers’ voice. For example, teachers’ requests to increase the number of art fairs were supported by the vertical team, along with school leaders acting on teachers’ call for additional common preparation periods. Other examples of teacher voice driving schoolwide decisions include horizontal teacher teams’ power to determine the theme of their respective grade shows. Additionally, grade-two teachers decided to transition to new curricula, resulting from their search for one that had a greater alignment to the schoolwide focus on the design and delivery of multiple-learning-style-based instruction. Teacher voice has also been integral to decisions regarding curricula for all grades, the introduction of a staff-student basketball game, and which digital platform to use in the creation and maintenance of students’ Individualized Education Programs (IEPs).