Quality Review Report

2018-2019

The Fresh Creek School
Elementary 19K325
875 Williams Avenue
Brooklyn
NY 11207

Principal: Lisa Goodson

Dates of Review:
March 6, 2019 - March 7, 2019

Lead Reviewer: Debra Tasioudis
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

The Fresh Creek 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>
<td>Additional Finding</td>
<td>Well Developed</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>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>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>Developing</td>
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</tbody>
</table>
## 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>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

## Systems for Improvement

*To what extent does the school...*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Area</th>
<th>Rating</th>
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</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>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>Area of Celebration</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: | 4.2 Teacher Teams and Leadership Development | Rating: Well Developed |

Findings

All teachers are engaged in inquiry-based lesson studies in professional collaborations with a focus on writing. Distributed leadership is embedded across the school.

Impact

There is schoolwide instructional and curricular coherence, and improvements in teacher and student learning. In addition to creating the curricula, teacher leaders play an integral role in decisions that affect student learning.

Supporting Evidence

- During the review, a team of fourth- and fifth-grade teachers was observed. The teachers engaged in a structured, inquiry-based lesson study model to strengthen their instructional capacity, and engaged in collaborative lesson planning, observation, and a review of student work from the lesson. The teachers reviewed student work connected to two Common Core Learning Standards, citing evidence from texts in written response and explaining relationships or interactions between two or more ideas or events in a historical text. Teachers also analyzed student work with an eye toward the effectiveness of an implemented strategy to help students to annotate the text and follow a formula for citing and supporting evidence in their responses. The analysis of student work also included progress monitoring for all students, organized into three groups based on performance, as is common for teams across the school. Teachers isolated additional strategies such as focusing on vocabulary, having higher performing students create models demonstrating their thinking and approach to the work, and adding more explicit instruction in writing for the group that teachers identified as needing it. Teachers also used a data tracking spreadsheet to track student progress in the standards. At the time of the review, the team had assessed student learning connected to these, as well as two literature standards four times over the school year, with all students, including students with disabilities and English Language Learners (ELLs) demonstrating increased achievement in the standards assessed.

- From a review of the team's work, there are demonstrated cycles of curricular revision from looking at student work and data, and the isolation of key Common Core Learning Standards that students excel in, as well as standards that need further focus. Teachers at the team meeting, and in a separate question and answer session shared that these revisions do not just live in the minutes of the team, but get uploaded to the online curricula in real time, leading to curricular adjustments for teachers across the grade-level bands. While the agendas and minutes articulate a change in focus from week to week, teachers remain engaged in looking at student work and data to revise the current unit and instruction. This work has also created coherence in writing tasks across the subject areas, as teachers now ensure that tasks in every subject always have a constructed response that requires students to cite evidence and explain what they know from the passage, problem, or given situation. Teachers also shared that all team’s inquiry work includes lesson studies with shared planning and intervisitations across the grade bands, increasing their instructional capacity by deepening their understanding of the standards across the grades.

- In addition to creating and revising the school's curricula, teacher voice plays an integral role in shaping professional learning in and outside of the school. Teacher leaders from each grade band meet with administrators in extended cabinet meetings twice a month to review data, curricular and instructional changes and conduct classroom walkthroughs to inform and develop professional learning and coaching sessions offered in and outside of the school. This ensures that teacher voice is integral to student and adult learning across the school.
Area of Focus

| Quality Indicator: | 1.2 Pedagogy | Rating: | Developing |

Findings

Across classrooms, teaching practices and supports for students are beginning to reflect alignment to the belief that students learn best through use of the workshop model and small-group work.

Impact

Work products and discussions inconsistently reflect high levels of student thinking and participation within classrooms.

Supporting Evidence

- Across classes, teaching practices are becoming aligned to the belief that students learn best through use of the workshop model, small-group instruction and students working with independence in small groups or pairs. However, in some classes visited, elements of the workshop model were missing, such as clear modeling or explicit instruction for students connected to the learning objective. While students had opportunities to engage in small-group instruction in most classes, the “I do” and “We do” portions of the lesson, a common expectation across the school, were either missing, or did not provide clarity for students about the lesson activities. In a lower-grade English Language Arts (ELA) lesson about distinguishing between genres, students were unable to distinguish between genres though teachers made some charts intended to help students tell genres apart. This lack of clarity led to uneven student thinking in their work products. In other classes, such as upper-grade social studies and science, there was no observable workshop model present in instruction.

- In a lower-grade Integrated Co-Teaching (ICT) class, both teachers worked with a small group of students, and some students worked alone during the reading lesson. The teachers modeled a strategy for students as they engaged with their own literature, but the students were not provided with the same materials as they worked independently, creating a disconnect between the teacher model and student task. Some students were unsure how to proceed during independent practice, leading to uneven levels of student thinking.

- Opportunities for students to collaborate in small-group discussions and small-group work were uneven across classes. In a lower-grade math lesson on finding ten more or less, teachers used the workshop model to engage students in learning, and sent students off to practice. Though students were seated in small groups, students worked independently, without discussion. In a science class, though students were seated together at tables and told to work in groups, students had independent work to complete and no guidance on what working together might look or sound like. In an upper-grade lesson on opinion writing, though students shared gathered research reflecting high levels of student thinking, discussions within groups were uneven. Some groups engaged in high-level discussions sharing their research and their writing plans while other groups did not engage in much discussion and sharing of their thinking and work products at all.
**Additional Finding**

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

School leaders and faculty ensure that curricula align to the Common Core, strategically focus on balancing informational and fiction texts, and promote deep understanding in math. Additionally, rigorous habits are embedded, usually through purposeful questions, in all grades and subjects.

**Impact**

Coherence of planned instruction emphasizes rigor for all students and creates opportunities for students to explore texts, academic vocabulary, and demonstrate their mathematical thinking in multiple ways.

**Supporting Evidence**

- Lesson plans shared throughout the review align strategically to the Common Core, usually with close alignment to one standard and skill, and opportunities for students to discuss what they know from the text, or about their mathematical thinking. All of the reading lessons shared align closely to one standard and plan for students to practice skills such as determining the central message in a text or determining the meaning of unknown words and phrases in a text. Also, evident across lesson plans is a balance of reading both literature and informational texts, aligned with the school's instructional focus that students be able to read closely and provide evidence in academic discussions and writing. In a lesson on determining the meaning of figurative language in a text, the plan includes discussion and writing prompts that ask students to cite evidence from text and plan for students to explore particular vocabulary words used by the author of the text.

- Units and pacing calendars also reflect attention to the school’s focus on close reading, discussion and writing, with units alternating in focus on fiction and non-fiction in ELA. In math, there is a focus on deep understanding of math and application, with opportunities for students to apply their mathematical thinking to real-world scenarios and explain their mathematical thinking in discussions and writing. In a piece of writing shared connected to an upper-grade unit on Westward Expansion, the student used text evidence to describe life during that time. In a lower-grade math task shared that aligned with a unit on addition and subtraction, the student task asked that students demonstrate their mathematical thinking in several ways, including the use of a model and writing. Across the grade bands, teachers conduct task analyses using a rubric to determine the rigor of a task before they are shared with students. School leaders also engage in this work alongside teachers with graded student work products to ensure that lessons and tasks require students to engage in rigorous habits.

- Across lesson and unit plans shared, teachers plan purposeful questions using Webb’s *Depth of Knowledge* to ensure that there are multiple entry points to provide all students with access to the tasks. Several ELA lesson plans shared include planned discussions and writing prompts to ensure that students cite evidence from the text in discussions before they engage in writing. These carefully planned activities and questions also ensure that the tasks as written in the plans are explicit. Most of those shared, plan for all students to engage in rigorous grade-level tasks and texts with varied supports for accessibility, rather than different levels of rigor. In a lower-grade lesson plan on determining the genre of a text, questions range from asking students to recall information from a fable, others asking students to distinguish between genres and provide a detailed explanation, and still others to promote strategic thinking and developing a detailed argument to support their own ideas using details from the story. This detail in planning rigorous questions at different levels was typical of lesson plans observed during the review.
Additional Finding

Quality Indicator: 2.2 Assessment
Rating: Developing

Findings
Across classrooms, teachers sometimes use rubrics and grading practices that align with the school’s curricula. Teachers check for understanding during instruction, usually through questioning, but often rely on students to self-report.

Impact
Students provide most feedback to their peers and receive limited feedback provided by teachers regarding student achievement. Teachers inconsistently make adjustments during instruction to meet student-learning needs.

Supporting Evidence

- During a meeting with students, students shared that the majority of the feedback that they receive is from their peers, not their teachers. A couple of pieces of work shared by students had feedback provided by the teacher. One had written feedback from the teacher that was illegible to the student; the other had feedback somewhat connected to the assignment’s criteria. The student was given a glow and a grow; the comments read: “Glow: You had a correct response and model. Grow: please don’t draw extra pictures on your paper.” Students at the meeting also shared that if they sought the teacher out to ask, they are able to get some feedback. Aligned with what students shared in the meeting, in classrooms visited throughout the review, most bulletin boards of student work displayed student work graded and given feedback only by students.

- Teachers graded a few pieces of student work shared at the meeting with students; other pieces shared were ungraded. One student shared a math test that they received in which the teacher circled the questions that were incorrect, without comment. The student noted that they had a test correction lesson in which students had an opportunity to swap papers with a peer and revise their work with help from a peer. This provided some feedback to the students and teachers about student achievement. On a writing task, a student received feedback from the teacher in the form of written glows, grows and notes in the margins of their work, but the student was unable to read the teachers handwriting.

- During classroom visits, teachers checked for understanding, usually through questioning, but often relied on students to self-report readiness or understanding. In several classes, teachers offer some adjustments to students through questioning or redirection, but students remained unclear about the task. In a reading lesson, a teacher offered a student some redirection for spelling an unknown word using a letter sound chart. The teacher offered the student some guidance, but after she walked away, the student was still unclear, and inserted a drawing, rather than able to spell the new word. In a math lesson, the teacher circulated through the room asking students if they understood the lesson. Some students were unable to complete their work but did not ask for help; others were finished and waiting for a new task and the check for understanding did not provide either with an effective adjustment to meet student-learning needs.
Additional Finding

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<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 staff, through written communication, professional learning and feedback. There is consistent communication with parents through monthly progress reports and an online platform about expectations connected to college and career.

Impact
School leaders ensure that there is professional learning and collaboration between colleagues, and accountability through observations. Ongoing communication between families and staff helps parents understand their children’s progress.

Supporting Evidence

- Weekly newsletters to the staff provide clarity for instructional expectations such as use of the workshop model, small-group instruction, data collection and analysis, classroom discussions, grade-team expectations, and professional learning. One sample shared includes reminders to teachers about the importance of peer-to-peer discussions in the classroom, tracking data on student performance in the focus standards, the focus for professional learning communities on questioning and looking at student work. There are also on- and off-site coaches that meet regularly with teachers and provide professional learning. The school leader meets with these coaches to ensure that sessions provided to teachers connect to the Danielson Framework for Teaching and school goals, and the school leader and coaches hold teachers accountable for expectations in professional learning through observations. While a structure is not yet in place for teachers to hold one another accountable for expectations, a review of the school’s professional learning calendar and conversations with teachers demonstrate that much of the school’s professional learning is teacher-led. Teachers also engage in lesson study and intervisitations focused on instruction, and structures are in place for teachers to reflect on and build their practice in light of their learning with colleagues.

- The school leader has also created vertical ELA and math instructional teams that meet weekly. The teams look at student data and conduct classroom walkthroughs with school leaders, usually focused on different areas of instructional expectations such as the use of small-group instruction, equity in the classroom, or the school’s instructional focus on ensuring that students have opportunities to read closely and provide evidence in academic discussions and writing in the classroom. The vertical teams meet with the school leaders after the walkthroughs to discuss trends and patterns. The school leader uses the gathered trends and patterns to create her weekly letter to staff, and school leaders, coaches and teachers create professional learning to support the staff in improving instructional practices. The school leader shared and a review of teacher observation reports confirm that teachers are then held accountable for these expectations and the implementation of professional learning through individual teacher observations conducted by the school leader.

- Most teachers provide parents with monthly progress reports to offer families feedback about student progress. In a meeting with parents, all shared that their child’s teacher uses an online communication system to constantly update parents about student progress and daily expectations in the classroom. Parents also shared that all communication goes home in English and Spanish to ease communication, and that Tuesday afternoons or alternate times are always available to them to meet with teachers to discuss student progress. Parents also shared that the staff help them through the middle-school application process and to understanding the changing expectations for students in middle school such as departmentalized subjects.
Additional Finding

Quality Indicator: 4.1 Teacher Support and Supervision  
Rating: Proficient

Findings

Feedback from classroom observations accurately captures strengths, challenges, and next steps using the Danielson Framework for Teaching. The instructional cabinet also uses teacher observation data to design professional learning and make informed decisions about teacher assignments.

Impact

Feedback and professional learning elevate schoolwide instructional practices and implementation of strategies that promote professional growth and reflection.

Supporting Evidence

- Feedback articulates clear expectations to teachers and broadly aligns not only to the Danielson Framework for Teaching, but also to the schoolwide focus on lesson planning, questioning and discussion techniques, engaging students in learning, and using assessment in instruction. Commendations and recommendations make explicit connections to the Danielson Framework for Teaching, and often point to specific evidence from teacher practice, or specific strategies for teachers to implement, such as engaging all students in small-group routines that involve students in a focused discussion of their work. In another observation report shared, the administrator noted that the teacher helped students to make connections to previous material and used repetition to engage students in close reading. The commendation also noted that the teacher implemented a previous suggestion of the visibility of the text, which resulted in a decrease in student misbehavior and an increase in students’ active engagement. This specificity of teacher practice articulates clear expectations to promote teacher growth.

- Other observation reports shared also demonstrated clear expectations and next steps and included a professional resource to promote professional growth and reflection. The teacher’s next step asked, “Please ensure that the task that students are engaged in is rigorous, cognitively challenging and that questions asked to students are planned before you deliver the lesson. I am also requiring that you read the article titled Frame Quality Questions.” The article given to the teacher also included a question and note, “What are the characteristics of questions that engage students in thinking and deep learning about content? Synthesize the focus questions; follow up in two weeks.” The clarity of next steps and the use of teacher observation data to design professional learning experiences for teachers was evident across the observation reports shared.

- Instructional cabinet meetings that include school administrators and teacher leaders create an effective system for using teacher observation data to design professional learning for individual teachers and teachers across the school. The team meets weekly to discuss trends and patterns in teacher observations to develop professional learning sessions on Mondays. Notes from the instructional cabinet meetings demonstrate that this data also focuses the coaching work of teacher leaders in the building and for directing the focus of off-site coaches that come to the school to support teachers in reading, math and writing instruction. During these discussions, school leaders also create a tracker of feedback and professional learning sessions in which teachers participate, and includes teacher strengths to identify teacher leaders in subject areas or instructional strategies, such as reciprocal teaching, that is helping to develop succession plans and inform teacher assignments for the following school year. Coaching partnerships and teacher intervisitations that occur outside of lesson study are also informed from this review of teacher observation data, building coherence and elevating instructional practices across the school.