Quality Review Report

2018-2019

P.S. 399 Stanley Eugene Clark
Elementary 17K399
2707 Albemarle Road
Brooklyn
NY 11226

Principal: Lakeasha Williams

Dates of Review:
December 18, 2018 - December 19, 2018

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

P.S. 399 Stanley Eugene Clark serves students in grade K 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>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>Developing</td>
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<tr>
<td>2.2 Align assessments to curricula, use on-going assessment and grading practices, and analyze information on student learning outcomes to adjust instructional decisions at the team and classroom levels</td>
<td>Additional Finding</td>
<td>Proficient</td>
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</tbody>
</table>
## School Culture

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>To what extent does the school...</th>
<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>
<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>Proficient</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>Area of Celebration</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>Well Developed</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>Proficient</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>Well Developed</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Findings
The school’s theory of action for goal setting and action planning is based on the concept that if school leaders develop and implement a school culture of teaching and learning, then scholars will consistently demonstrate significant academic and social emotional gains. The School Improvement Team (SIT) fosters effective community involvement in planning and decision-making.

Impact
Goals are understood and supported by the entire school community and leverage changes that accelerate academic and social-emotional learning for students.

Supporting Evidence

- The principal developed a team to guide the school’s work in goal setting and action planning, known as the School Improvement Team (SIT). The SIT meets frequently during the summer, and continues to meet a minimum of once a month during the school year. The team reviews data and tracks progress toward the school goals, which include using data to drive differentiated instruction, integrating the new social-emotional learning program to reduce behavior referrals, and increasing the use of inquiry and data analysis to guide the work of the school's professional learning communities (PLCs). The team includes school leaders, teachers, paraprofessionals, parents, related service providers, and a coach from the district. They are organized into smaller diverse teams and focus on one goal for the year. Teams meet in cycles to outline steps to be taken to meet the goal, what resources are needed and set actionable small goals. Additionally, they regularly monitor implementation of their action plans from collected artifacts, student data, revised mission and vision statements, teacher team minutes, lesson plans, and student work products. As PLCs demonstrate improvements in English Language Arts and math through six-week cycles, goals are revised. Through the SIT, and its smaller working groups, school leaders effectively involve and communicate with the whole school community regarding school improvement planning and decision-making.

- At the time of the review, SIT meeting notes demonstrate that, through two cycles of analysis, each of the school’s goals underwent thoughtful adjustments to accelerate student learning. Through the work of the team focused on the school’s social-emotional learning goal, revisions were made to include robust supports and resources for parents and educators to develop a common language and approach to meeting student learning needs, and using shared de-escalation and restorative justice practices. Additional smaller goals were also created, such as the creation of kindness clubs to increase student learning regarding the academic and personal behaviors related to college and career readiness. Similarly, the school goal on using data to drive differentiated instruction was thoughtfully adjusted after a review of teacher observation data. Subsequently, new goals were created focusing on lesson planning and revising the ways that teachers look at student work, learning standards, and rubrics.

- In addition to parent and staff involvement on the SIT, the school community is also engaged in school improvement through the Parent Teacher Association (PTA). The president met regularly with administrators in the summer leading to many parents regularly volunteering and assisting in the classrooms, cafeteria and at school events. They regularly attend and take part in the meetings with teachers and school leaders. One staffer shared, “Our big goal is improving how we meet the social-emotional and academic needs of children. We met as a team in the summer to come up with our mission statement and what we wanted for our first year together. We continue to meet as a team to look at how we use data to inform our instruction and make decisions together.”
Findings
Across classrooms, scaffolds and supports do not yet consistently provide students with access to tasks and discussions. Scaffolds, especially the use of graphic organizers and use of model responses, do not consistently allow students to demonstrate their thinking.

Impact
There are uneven levels of engagement and uneven demonstrations of higher order thinking skills in student work products and discussions across classrooms.

Supporting Evidence

- Across classrooms, teaching strategies, such as providing students with access to the thinking of peers, graphic organizers, anchor charts, and differentiated tasks were used to provide students with access to the curricula. However, these supports sometimes limited how much thinking students were able to demonstrate. In a reading class, students were given a skill sheet requiring the learner to make connections between events in a text. It provided a model response, yet students were uncertain of the task, or were unclear whether they were looking for cause and effect relationships or sequencing events. Similarly, in another reading class, students were asked to compare and contrast characters in two separate texts, but the graphic organizer asked them to identify individual story elements lacking a section for students to synthesize information across texts. In a Science, Technology, Engineering and Math (STEM) lesson, students were asked to demonstrate how light allows animals to see. The graphic organizer given students asked open-ended questions, and provided ample space for students to write about what they observed, allowing students to clearly demonstrate their thinking. There was also a vocabulary word wall with defined words from the unit, and opportunities for students to use the wall, and discuss their thinking with peers as they worked. This teaching practice, which allowed all students in the class to demonstrate higher-order thinking, was not seen across classes.

- In math classes, there were uneven levels of engagement and uneven demonstration of student thinking in their work products. In one math class, students used a strategy to solve multi-step word problems, and students had copies of the strategy and used it as a checklist as they worked independently to solve the problem. Although some students finished early and waited for next steps from the teacher, students were able to explain their thinking, and how they used the strategy to problem solve. In another math class, students were tasked with creating equations to solve one-step multiplication word problems. However, students were unable to articulate a strategy that they were using. Although students were given multiplication charts to scaffold their thinking, several students shared that they would ask the teacher if their work was right or not, and wait for guidance.

- Consistent evidence of student engagement was not in evidence in most of the classes visited. In a math class, students were tasked with multiplying multiples of 10,000 and recognizing patterns. Students were given one sheet of chart paper and one task card, prompting high levels of student discussion as small groups worked together. The lesson included time for groups to share their process and ask questions of one another. However, in other classes, some teacher-to-student questioning persisted, as in a social studies lesson, where the teacher asked individual students questions, limiting opportunities for all learners to share their thinking.
Additional Finding

<table>
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<tr>
<th>Quality Indicator:</th>
<th>1.1 Curriculum</th>
<th>Rating:</th>
<th>Proficient</th>
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Findings
School leaders and faculty use a variety of curricular resources to create standards-driven curricula that focuses on vocabulary, text-based evidence, fluency, and deep understanding in math. Units and lessons include differentiated tasks and are refined using student data.

Impact
Curricula and academic tasks are accessible and promote college readiness for a diversity of learners.

Supporting Evidence

- School leaders and staff use a variety of curricular resources to create standards-driven instruction. In lesson plans, teachers ensure that learning objectives closely align to particular standards, purposefully selected based on data-driven discussions with school leaders and colleagues. Though the focuses on individual standards vary from lesson to lesson, most lesson plans reviewed demonstrate a focus on explicit academic vocabulary instruction. Students are required to provide text-based answers across the content areas, aligned with the instructional shifts. In a fifth grade lesson on early American History, the lesson focused on the reading for information standard, explaining the connection between events within an historical context. The lesson objective closely aligned with the standard, as did the lesson’s activities and materials. There was evidence of planning for three groups, each examining primary sources, with varying levels of support from the teacher and their peers, so that all students, including students with disabilities and English Language Learners (ELLs) have access to the tasks.

- Teacher-created units combine elements of various literacy programs to ensure that students engage in tasks that promote a balance of literacy skills aligned with fiction and non-fiction reading and writing to address these instructional shifts. In a second grade plan, the first half of the unit aligned to reading and writing standards for fiction, and the second half for non-fiction skills to ensure that students engage with literature and informational texts. The unit also included foundational phonics work, vocabulary and a range of stories and resources from different curricula and online supports to ensure accessibility for a variety of learners.

- In math units and individual lesson plans there is a dual focus on fluency skills, and application so that students demonstrate deep understanding. In a math unit on understanding place value, there was evidence of purposeful decisions to build coherence and align lessons to standards following a deep analysis of data conducted by fifth grade teachers and school leaders. This resulted in teachers isolating three standards for focus and possible student misconceptions. The six week unit plan included attention to these standards, integrated several paper and online learning materials to ensure that students practice fluency and deep understanding of dividing two-digit numbers, comparing and rounding decimals and other skills connected to the unit. The unit, as do others, includes a weekly focus on math problem solving or word problem dissection, requiring students to be explicit about the strategy that they chose to solve a problem, and explain their mathematical thinking in writing and to peers.
**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**

Common assessments are used to determine student progress towards meeting goals across grades and subjects in six-week assessment cycles. During classroom instruction teachers use questioning and student self-assessment to check for understanding.

**Impact**

Teachers make effective adjustments to curricula and instruction to meet student-learning needs.

**Supporting Evidence**

- Assessment calendars and teacher team meeting notes evidence six-week cycles for assessment and use of common assessments across the subject areas. Leveled reading assessments, end of module or unit tests in the core subjects, bi-monthly online reading comprehension assessments and on-demand writing tasks with common rubrics are used to determine student progress. Teachers create class profile spreadsheets with this data. During data chats with school leaders and colleagues, teachers create action plans that isolate re-teaching skills for students in groups leveled one through four. In a lower grade English Language Arts (ELA) plan, identifying upper and lower case letters, practicing deletion and substitution of sounds to develop phonemic awareness, and practicing initial, middle and end sounds were isolated for re-teaching across the levels. Lesson plans demonstrate adjustments aligned to the plans to adjust instruction at the classroom level.

- A review of third and fifth grade action plans shared for ELA and math units show that common assessments are used to adjust the curricula and smaller assessments are administered throughout the unit. A fifth grade action plan indicates analysis of a fifth grade writing unit, and the decision by the teachers to add opportunities throughout the unit for students to self-assess, using checklists throughout the writing process, a final rubric and added opportunities for peer assessment. Similarly, a third grade math action plan includes the creation of new math problems that include students as characters in the problems, added lessons targeting foundation facts and more opportunities for students to use manipulatives to model their mathematical thinking. These adjustments to the curricula, instruction, and assessment practices were based on a review of mid-module assessment data.

- Across classes, teachers pose questions and collect data to adjust the next lesson, or use mid-workshop interruptions to make adjustments to meet student-learning needs during the lesson. In an upper-grade reading lesson focusing on sequencing within the text, the teacher went from small group to small group, listening to student discussions and reviewing student work. Questions were posed to clarify misconceptions. Students were asked, “How do you know? What line of the text supports what you are saying?” Similarly, in a math class where students were creating and solving one-step multiplication word problems, the teacher circulated among the groups, posing questions regarding the order of steps in their problem solving. The teacher used a mid-workshop interruption to allow students to self-assess. Emoji cards were employed for students to inform the teacher whether they were comfortable with the task, or needed additional guidance. This prompted the teacher to offer a student, who used a confused-face emoji, the support of a peer. An effective adjustment to the instruction followed. These checks for understanding, self-assessment, and adjustments were common across classes.
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 and coaches consistently communicate high expectations to staff, particularly addressing a focus on data-driven instruction and the Danielson Framework for Teaching. Frequent communication, along with Access to All workshops, provide parents with information regarding student progress and college and career readiness.

Impact

Ongoing professional learning sessions and a system of accountability results in the achievement of high expectations. Families understand the skills and strategies taught in the classroom and their children’s academic progress.

Supporting Evidence

- The school leaders consistently communicate high expectations for instruction and professionalism beginning with the staff handbook, and continuing through the professional learning events that align with the school’s goals and instructional expectations. A review of documents, including the staff handbook and professional learning materials addressed clear expectations for hands on math instruction, the practice of explicit instruction, differentiating tasks in the classroom, and use of the Danielson Framework for Teaching. School leaders share instructional newsletters with the staff to be clear about expectations for instruction and lesson planning. Those expectations are echoed by emails shared by external math and literacy coaches that conduct professional learning. Notes from meetings between the literacy coach and teachers, as well as notes from school leaders and teachers also reflect expectations for a data-driven approach when reviewing student assessment outcomes to tailor instruction in the classroom. Teacher observation records reflect the use of classroom observations to hold teachers accountable for use of the workshop model, standards-driven instruction, opportunities for students to provide text-based answers, and develop a deep understanding of mathematical concepts.

- Teachers and school leaders write letters to parents and families about expectations and learning activities, the online programs that support learning at home and questions they should ask at parent-teacher conferences. There are newsletters for families of students with disabilities and students learning English as a new language as a new language that help parents to understand student engagement in the classroom, classroom units of study and celebrations of student work. Parents also receive progress reports and report cards. Parents shared that teachers are consistently available to them for discussions regarding student progress through an online platform. Teachers across the school use this program to share grades and other information about student performance. Parents also explained that teachers are regularly available to them on Tuesday afternoons and at dismissal to ensure that parents fully understand their child’s progress.

- The school leaders and staff host monthly Access to All Learners instructional workshops that focus on specific academic skills in reading and math to prepare parents to support their children at home. Parents learn the skills and strategies being used in the class and have opportunities to clarify any misunderstandings they may have about the content or strategies being taught. There are articulation meetings and workshops to prepare parents for the expectations in the next grade, or in middle school. The guidance counselor provides one-on-one support for parents for the middle school application process. As one parent shared, her one-on-one meeting with the guidance counselor helped to ensure that they were able to successfully complete the middle school application.
Additional Finding

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<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 structured, inquiry-based collaborations that promote the achievement of the school’s goal to ensure that students are provided high-quality, differentiated instruction. Distributed leadership structures are in place.

Impact

The work of teacher teams and teacher leadership promotes shared leadership and improved student learning.

Supporting Evidence

- During the review, a fourth and fifth grade team of teachers and related service providers met focusing their discussion on the reintroduction of a strategy for making student thinking visible while solving math problems. Guided by a teacher leader, the team of nine educators divided into two groups. They discussed the connected standard and reviewed student work using a protocol, noting student thinking, the use of the provided strategy, and student misconceptions. They developed next steps for teachers, which included reinforcing math vocabulary terms, and emphasizing the use of formulas with pictorial models to support student thinking. The team’s work focused on the school goal, which focused on students developing and demonstrating deep understanding in solving mathematical problems. The work of the teacher team led to the addition of differentiated supports and mini lessons for students with disabilities and ELLs. Information on how the Common Core standards connected to area and perimeter, and the changes from fourth to fifth grade strengthened the instructional capacity of teachers.

- This format of isolating a standard, a strategy to be taught and reviewing connected student work to determine instructional next steps is a common inquiry approach for teacher teams across the school. Reflections from team inquiry cycles demonstrate a focus on implementing other strategies, such as the turn and talk discussion strategy, as well as evidence of teachers unpacking Common Core standards and recreating student tasks to better align to the standards. These practices strengthen teachers’ pedagogy and lead to improved student learning.

- Distributive leadership structures are in place where teachers serve as grade leaders, and head the vertical instructional and curricula teams. The instructional and curricula teams, bring teacher leaders, related service providers and school leaders together to ensure that teachers and providers have a voice in key decisions that affect learning strategies and curricula used in classrooms. Grade leaders guide the work of grade level teams in planning, supporting new teachers, and building coherence in pacing across the grade. There are content area leads who attend district professional learning sessions and turnkey professional learning to teachers across the school. This allows for building coherence of the instructional strategies used in ELA, math and social studies lessons. Teacher leaders also guided the work of creating curricula, and an investment in an online ELA and math program that the school recently adopted to support student learning. Teachers were instrumental in the selection of areas of focus related to the Common Core standards for individuals and groups of students.