Quality Review Report

2018-2019

Sunset Park Avenues Elementary School

Elementary 15K516

4222 4th Avenue
Brooklyn
NY 11232

Principal: Jessica Knudson

Dates of Review:
May 9, 2019 - May 10, 2019

Lead Reviewer: Kimberly Bradley
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

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

School Quality Ratings

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Instructional Core</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>To what extent does the school...</td>
<td>Area</td>
<td>Rating</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>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>Area of Focus</td>
<td>Proficient</td>
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</table>
## School Quality Ratings continued

### School Culture

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>To what extent does the school...</th>
<th>Area</th>
<th>Rating</th>
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<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 Celebration</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>
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### Systems for Improvement

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<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>Proficient</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>Proficient</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>
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<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>
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<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>
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Area of Celebration

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Quality Indicator:</th>
<th>1.4 Positive Learning Environment</th>
<th>Rating:</th>
<th>Proficient</th>
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Findings

The school’s approach to culture-building, discipline, and social-emotional support results in a safe and inclusive environment. Structures are in place, such as morning meetings and closing circles, to ensure that each student is known well by at least one adult.

Impact

The school’s environment and culture are conducive to student and adult learning, and students and adults treat each other respectfully, with student voice welcome and valued. Adults provide guidance and support to students that align with student learning needs.

Supporting Evidence

- To support the social-emotional needs of students and an inclusive school culture, the school has adopted Responsive Classroom as a guiding tool across classrooms. Multiple staff members have participated in Responsive Classroom institutes outside of the building, and school leaders have provided full-day, onsite trainings for the entire staff. Such training ensures staff are aligned with the program’s principles and are supported in creating safe, engaging classroom communities where students feel a sense of belonging and ownership. This occurs through the implementation of classroom routines that give students opportunities to share how they are feeling each day. Components of Responsive Classroom, such as morning meetings and closing circles, help to build positive learning communities within classrooms. Female students also participate in Girls on the Run, a physical activity-based youth development program for girls. Social-emotional development is taught through interactive lessons and running games. Girls on the Run focuses on health and fitness and culminates with the girls competing in a 5K running event.

- The culture of sustainability through a partnership with Zero Waste includes a student Green Team. Students apply to participate and act as liaisons of sustainability and the overall green education program at the school. These students lead instruction for other students, organize fairs, and make presentations to staff and parents regarding sustainability efforts. As part of their involvement with the Green Team, student members conduct recycling audits and determine letter grades for the overall quality of recycling efforts across the school that are posted in rooms throughout the building. This program is an example of how student voice is welcomed and valued.

- Students reported at the student meeting that they feel well known by multiple adults through structures such as morning meetings and closing circles, where they can check in and share what they learned that day. Moreover, students communicated that they feel safe at the school, and they know whom to speak to if they need social-emotional support. Consistent social-emotional learning is reinforced in classrooms across the school, with lessons about the school’s core values: integrity, inclusiveness, resilience, curiosity, and creativity. Each lesson is aligned to the grade-level and includes activities and tasks over four periods per month. These lessons are connected to books and videos that illustrate the core values, with teachers reinforcing where in the text or video the core value appears and guiding students in making personal connections to each lesson and value. The focus on social-emotional growth connected to the school’s core values through these lessons supports the staff in meeting students where they are and aligns with the individual learning needs of each student.
Findings

Across classrooms, teachers use or create assessments and rubrics aligned with the school’s curricula, including Fountas and Pinnell (F&P) running records and Teachers College writing assessments. School leaders and teachers use common assessments to determine student progress toward goals across grades and subject areas.

Impact

Though teachers provide students with actionable feedback regarding student achievement, these practices were not evident across a vast majority of classrooms. While assessment data is used to adjust curricula and instruction, there is not yet evidence that tracking progress is leading to increased student mastery.

Supporting Evidence

- Across classrooms, samples of student work products showed teacher-written actionable feedback directing students to the steps they should take to strengthen their work. Examples of this include feedback from a fifth-grade writing assignment, “Be specific about how castles were built,” and from a fifth-grade opinion essay, “Next time, make sure you indent your paragraphs- you don’t have to skip lines. Also, make sure you explain each piece of evidence – tell why it is important to the theme.” Actionable feedback appears on post-it notes and is written on rubrics across the school in different grades and subjects. While actionable feedback is apparent across classrooms, some work products brought to the student meeting did not contain actionable feedback, illustrating that this practice is not yet in place across a vast majority of classrooms.

- Teachers use rubrics aligned to the school’s curricula to rate student performance on assignments, including a Spanish language rubric for a research assignment on the history of immigration and writing rubrics from Teachers College for argument and opinion essays. Teachers indicate student grades according to the rubric by circling levels attained based on the assignment. Additionally, teachers use rubrics as checklists. One student reported, “We use rubrics in writing when learning about immigration. We use them once a month, about the topic of theme, and they include a checklist in one class for writing.” However, not all students understood the language used in the rubrics. Consequently, these rubrics do not yet provide actionable and meaningful feedback across all grades and subjects. Moreover, assessment practices do not yet offer a clear portrait of student mastery, as evidenced by some assessment documents that lacked clarity for students.

- Common assessments are used to determine student progress and considerations for schoolwide support. In literacy, teachers administer F&P running records to assess student reading levels and the Teachers College writing continuum to assess student writing across the genres of narrative, informational, and persuasive. In reviewing reading data last year, the school noted gaps in reading for a number of students. This observation led to the implementation of data-driven units across grades, where teachers were supported by instructional coaches in analyzing student data in an effort to target individual deficits in reading development. As a result of this data analysis from common assessments, teachers provided targeted small group work that better met the specific needs of students. In addition, there were instances of instructional adjustments and refinements of curricula, such as the creation of culminating projects at the end of each unit and the inclusion of more content rich non-fiction. But while some targeted students have shown growth, not all students have demonstrated increased mastery.
Findings
School leaders and faculty ensure that curricula are aligned to Common Core Learning Standards and integrate the instructional shifts of balancing informational and literary text and mathematical fluency. Across grades and subjects, rigorous habits and higher-order skills are emphasized for all students, including English Language Leaners (ELLs) and students with disabilities.

Impact
The curricula and academic tasks support college and career readiness for all students and student development of rigorous habits and higher-order thinking skills.

Supporting Evidence

- A review of curricular documents reveals alignment to the Common Core and New York State content standards, where applicable, as well as integration of the instructional shifts across grades and content areas. The school uses Teachers College Reading and Writing Project curriculum for reading and writing. In math, the school uses the Engage NY math curriculum and Otter Creek, which is a daily routine to increase fact fluency in grades one through five. Instructional shifts include the use of a balance of literary and informational texts in English Language Arts (ELA) and fluency in math. For instance, two cross-content, integrated units per grade level have been created for students to build knowledge of the world around them through the use of content-rich non-fiction, hands-on project learning, and field trips. A math lesson plan describes how students will build fluency in their knowledge of geometry concepts related to polygons through a geometry card game.

- Unit plans consistently challenge students to utilize rigorous habits in the course of instruction. Learning objective statements in unit plans include, “Students will be able to design an experiment and complete the first three parts of a lab report (question, hypothesis, and procedure) with a partner,” and “Students will study immigration in order to understand identity, belonging, and the impact of the human experience on society in New York City.” Additionally, students are asked to consistently write and connect their writing to evidence from the text. Lesson plans regularly detail high-level questions. Examples of higher-order questions include the following: from a second-grade integrated unit, “How do scientists learn about the world?”; from a fourth-grade integrated unit, “What can primary and secondary documents tell us?”; and from a fifth-grade integrated unit, “Has the United States of America lived up to the promise and potential of its history and status?” Thus, across lesson and unit plans, there is evidence of access to rigorous and higher-level thinking tasks for groups of students through questioning and exploration.

- A review of curricular documents demonstrates academic tasks consistently emphasize rigorous habits and higher-order skills for all students across grades and subjects. A first-grade integrated unit on rainforests asks students to provide evidence from the books provided to describe how different animals in the rainforest have adapted to their environment. A third-grade reading lesson asks students to use a graphic organizer to paraphrase while taking notes on informational text. These lessons include modifications for students with Individualized Education Programs (IEPs) to address IEP learning goals. Lesson plans involving ELLs include scaffolds, such as translated resources and sentence stems, so they are able to demonstrate their thinking according to the same high-level standards expected of all students.
Additional Finding

**Quality Indicator:**

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<th>1.2 Pedagogy</th>
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<td>Rating:</td>
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<td>Proficient</td>
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**Findings**

Across classrooms, teaching practices are aligned to the curricula and reflect an articulated set of beliefs about how students learn best. These practices are informed by the Danielson *Framework for Teaching*, integrate the instructional shifts, and focus on student engagement and small group instruction.

**Impact**

Across classrooms, student work products and discussions reflect high levels of student thinking and participation so that all students produce meaningful work products.

**Supporting Evidence**

- During a second-grade reading workshop about being a scientist, students worked with a partner to write a hypothesis and procedures as part of the development of their experiment focused on force and motion. Students who needed additional support met in a small group with the teacher and were given a graphic organizer and sentence stems, in addition to a model hypothesis statement they could reference. During a third-grade math lesson with station work, two groups were working independently and two small groups were led by teachers as they worked on equivalent fractions and word problems involving elapsed time. During a fifth-grade reading workshop lesson, students first watched a video focused on point-of-view and then transitioned to working in small groups as they reviewed their assigned articles, determining the point of view and perspective that was presented by the author. Across the majority of classrooms, teaching practices, including small group instruction, reflect the articulated beliefs of how students learn best.

- During a fourth-grade integrated social studies/ELA lesson focused on the immigrant experience, students were on the floor watching interviews of immigrants sharing their experiences of coming to the United States. During the lesson, the teacher would pause and provide opportunities for students to turn and discuss their observations, using evidence from the video. During a first-grade, dual language lesson about animals and their adaptation to the environment, students worked with partners and were provided with sentence stems and images of animals to support their discussions of specific animals and their adaptations. During a fourth-grade dual language math lesson, students first worked independently on their do now problem about decimals and place values and then transitioned to a whole-class discussion of their work. Students took turns going up to the front of the room to share their work on the document camera as the other students used accountable talk stems to ask clarifying questions. During this lesson, there were clear routines, and the conversation was student-led. Thus, there is evidence across classrooms that student work products reflect high levels of student thinking and participation.

- During a second-grade lesson focused on forces and motion, students worked in pairs as they conducted their experiments and recorded their observations about the speed of a toy car on a ramp. They conducted their experiments more than once as they followed the same procedure. Ultimately, they tracked any differences in the data they collected and shared their findings with other students in the class. During a first-grade lesson on comparing and contrasting different animals, the teacher first modeled with the class how to use a sentence stem to describe how animals are similar and different. Students then practiced using the sentence stems with a partner as they discussed different animals and recorded their discussions on a graphic organizer.
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 the entire staff through weekly memos and a professional development (PD) plan. School leaders and staff consistently communicate expectations to families that are connected to a path to college and career readiness.

Impact

Feedback and support have increased teachers' understanding and awareness of school leaders' expectations around teaching and learning. Communication with families provides opportunities for them to understand student progress toward meeting standards and expectations.

Supporting Evidence

- High expectations for teachers are communicated through frequent classroom observations by school leaders as they provide feedback utilizing the Danielson Framework for Teaching as the standard for professionalism and high-quality instruction. One example of feedback states, “You had a chance to check-in with students during independent work time and had targeted questions to assess their word solving abilities and provided specific feedback to help support this work. I encourage you to think about the questions and prompts you have to support students in assessing their comprehension of the text they are reading, thinking about the specific level and what’s holding that child back from moving onto the next level.” School leaders outline for teachers what the school's instructional focus looks like in a classroom and how it is aligned to the Danielson Framework for Teaching. For example, teachers are encouraged to plan focused, differentiated small group lessons incorporating more questioning and discussion that go beyond guided reading and decoding to support the learning needs of each student. As a result of feedback and communication from school leaders, teachers are supported in meeting the school's expectations.

- Teachers receive a faculty handbook from school leadership that reviews areas of schoolwide focus, such as the school's instructional focus, grading policy, guidelines for unit and lesson planning, and the classroom environment that are reinforced regularly by school leaders. A PD calendar makes clear that school leaders support teachers in their understanding of expectations in addressing topics such as NYSELAT (New York State English as a Second Language Achievement Test) planning, coding running records for data, forming responsive small groups, and racial equity. PD topics related to literacy planning and coding running records are differentiated for lower and upper grade teachers. In weekly memos, school leaders remind the staff about expectations around the school's instructional focus on improving student literacy and using student performance data from running records to inform adjustments in their classroom instruction. School leaders provide a new teacher guide and assign mentors to teachers new to the school. The guide outlines the routines and procedures at the school and whom teachers should contact if they have additional questions.

- High expectations are shared with families through parent workshops and Family Fridays held each month, with a focus on providing families with strategies to best support their children outside of class. Workshops at the PTA meetings help explain report cards and grade wide expectations in addition to the middle school application process. Documents are translated into multiple languages and shared with parents, including the individualized reading levels for their child. School staff communicate with parents through text messages, emails, and parent-teacher conferences about student academic and social-emotional progress. Parents shared that they have a clear understanding about the expectations for college and career readiness as well as for preparing their children for the next grade level.
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 professional collaborations that promote achievement of the school goals of strengthening student writing, mathematical thinking, and student engagement as part of the implementation of the Common Core. Teacher teams consistently analyze data and student work for students they share.

Impact

Teachers’ collaborations have strengthened their instructional capacity. Teacher team work typically results in progress toward goals for groups of students.

Supporting Evidence

- The school is involved in the citywide Learning Partners initiative that provides an opportunity for triads and quads of schools to collaborate and strengthen classroom practices. A meeting of the Learning Partners team, consisting of teacher representatives across grade levels, began with a discussion of chapter one of *Culturally Responsive Pedagogy* to address the staff’s need to incorporate culturally relevant pedagogy to support student engagement. For example, a class may have multiple students that speak Spanish, but each student may speak a different dialect, so scaffolds must support the language needs of each student. The team also reviewed student work in math, looking for trends across classes. Members of the team determined that while most students can solve multi-step problems and explain their thinking orally, they are not able to clearly describe their thinking in writing. In addition, teachers noted that ELLs had an easier time describing their thinking in their dominate language. The next steps identified by the team included using sentence stems in both English and the dominant language of students and offering more opportunities for student discussion. As a result of the inquiry work of teacher teams, the instructional capacity of the majority of teachers has been strengthened.

- Grade-level teacher teams analyzed math State assessment data and determined next steps to support the learning of groups of students. The third-grade team noticed that the data showed that students performed weakest on questions related to the standard focused on measurement and data. As a result, teachers decided to build graphs into morning meetings and to graph student responses during shares. The fourth-grade team noticed that angles/degrees was the area of greatest need for their students and determined that the pacing of units over the year did not leave enough time to teach geometry concepts. The team decided to use protractors from the beginning of the school year and implement five days of lessons focused on angle measures. The fifth-grade team’s examination of data showed that students struggled with multiplication word problems and did not have a clear understanding of the vocabulary used. This team decided to incorporate more content and academic vocabulary to help students understand and demonstrate their thinking.

- For the past two years, the school has been involved with Learning Partners, and the staff has focused on looking at best practices for ELLs, including observing instruction for ELLs in other schools to refine practices. The Learning Partners team has examined student data and work samples for ELLs and noted that many ELLs have difficulty communicating their mathematical thinking in writing. The teacher team conducted classroom observations in kindergarten through grade five to get a better understanding of how students are supported in math. They determined there was a greater need for student discussion and frontloading academic and content vocabulary. The team is also working on shared mathematical vocabulary that is used across grade levels to increase students’ ability to explain their mathematical thinking verbally and in writing.