Quality Review Report

2018-2019

P.S. 125 Ralph Bunche
Elementary 05M125
425 West 123 Street
Manhattan
NY 10027

Principal: Reginald Higgins

Dates of Review:
January 16, 2019 - January 17, 2019

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

School Quality Ratings

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

**To what extent does the school...**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Area</th>
<th>Rating</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1.4 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 Well Developed</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 Well Developed</td>
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## Systems for Improvement

**To what extent does the school...**

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<tr>
<th>Area</th>
<th>Rating</th>
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<tr>
<td>1.3 Make strategic organizational decisions to support the schools instructional goals and meet student learning needs, as evidenced by meaningful student work products</td>
<td>Additional Finding 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 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 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 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 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>Well Developed</th>
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#### Findings

A theory of action informs the approach to culture building, discipline with social and emotional learning (SEL) support. The school community strategically aligns professional development (PD) that focuses on the needs of all constituents by promoting students’ personal growth and academic development.

#### Impact

An inclusive culture meaningfully involves student voice through school ambassadors, student-led parent/teacher conferences, and student council. The alignment of PD sessions in SEL, family involvement has improved student academic and student experiences.

#### Supporting Evidence

- There is a new plan in place to rebrand and build on the school's progressive education theme. Focusing on its strength as a safe and inclusive environment, the school community acknowledges the diversity of the students and families, in a number of ways, through the celebration of all holidays, multi-cultural fair presenting and exhibiting unique customs and students’ narrative writings about their families and traditions. In addition, the school leaders and staff encourage students to be active contributors and participators in the school community and add their much-valued voices. Five school ambassadors are responsible for taking visitors on tours through the building year-round. There is a student school president and an assistant president who leads the end of day announcements. Students campaigned successfully to offer chocolate milk on Fridays. A student led the effort to promote a school newspaper that addressed student work examples, student reviews of favorite books, two Broadway musicals, and sneakers. The student whose idea it was to create the newspaper stated, “I did it by myself” and acknowledged that many other students joined the team that produced the first edition. Students also worked together to develop the transportation of leftover lunch food to help provide nutrition at people living in shelters.

- The school’s inclusive culture supports progress toward the school’s social emotional goals. The entire staff and students work together with Bank Street College in order to create a collaborative school environment using Emotionally Responsive Practice techniques (ERP) such as communicating feelings, mindfulness, and cozy corners in each classroom. According to the 2018 Learning Environment Survey, 100 percent of pre-k through grade-five teachers say that students are safe in the hallways, bathrooms, locker rooms, and cafeteria of their school. Additionally, 93 percent of families say that at their school their child is safe. In addition, 95 percent of families say that their school makes them aware if there are any emotional or psychological issues affecting their child's academic performance. During the review, staff, children, and their families share problem-solving protocols and behavior expectations that made them feel safe and supported in the school.

- There are strategic alignments among PD opportunities, family outreach, and student learning experiences and supports. Teachers participate in PD about stress reduction and mindfulness, self-care restorative circles, Brain Power and Peace by Peace. Brain Power is a SEL program for students, teachers, and parents that develop focusing skills, confidence, and wellness for students; stress management, improvement in energy levels and creating harmonious relationships within families for parents. In addition, the parents association administers their own survey to parents to gauge parent levels of engagement, participation, and feedback to the school staff on perceptions of classroom practices and student success. Because of school staff and parents working together, students, during the meeting, shared that they are collaborative problem-solvers and they have confidence in all areas of their lives.
Area of Focus

<table>
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<tr>
<th>Quality Indicator:</th>
<th>2.2 Assessment</th>
<th>Rating:</th>
<th>Developing</th>
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Findings

Assessments including rubrics loosely align with the school’s curriculum along with limited evidence of actionable feedback from most teachers, checks for understanding and student self-assessments.

Impact

The use of assessments by teachers and the lack of actionable feedback to students results in a limited understanding of student achievement and inconsistent instructional adjustments made by teachers.

Supporting Evidence

- Examples of rubric use demonstrate some alignment with the school’s curricula. Feedback varies across grades and subjects, such as in an English Language Arts (ELA) class where a student received a response from the teacher in the form of a glow and a grow. The glow stated, “Excellent, you got right into Ben’s character. Great job, showing your thoughts and feelings.” The grow stated to “proofread for spelling errors and appropriate capitalization.” However, in another class, a student earned a level four on a historical fiction-writing project. At the bottom of the scoring sheet, a teacher wrote a glow, “Thank you for putting so much effort on this project. Loved your story, you have a gift for using descriptive language.” There were no written grows to guide next steps. Students, during the meeting, reported that feedback was inconsistent with rubrics, or nonexistent. Therefore, student feedback was documented inconsistently and did not always guide next steps.

- Teachers shared that every classroom has a different method for storing and/or displaying student work and the ways in which feedback is given. Some teachers rely more on verbal feedback, others use written and some use both. Some teachers use rubrics, others use checklists. Students stated that they did not always understand the rubric language. For example, on a math rubric, a student received a level two and the feedback stated the lack of clarity in the student’s explanation regarding their answer. Additionally, not all feedback is actionable. For example, feedback on a grade-three math performance task was, “Great work. Remember to explain and show all work.” Feedback was inconsistent, thus impeding students from actualizing their next steps.

- Students self-assess in some classes. In grade two, students use a checklist to self-assess in narrative writing. In another class, students reflected on their writing. Student comments included, “I am so proud that I started writing today.” Another student stated, “I am proud of myself. I keep making mistakes, I fix them, and then I finish.” During the meeting, students shared that this was an inconsistent practice. During the meeting with teachers, they shared their expectations for checks for understanding, during and after beginning tasks. Methods include turn and talks with teacher prompts and during share times at the end of a lesson. However, in the observed classes, adjustment of instruction to address students’ understanding was inconsistent which hindered learning.
Findings
School leaders and faculty ensure that the curricula align to Common Core Learning Standards, with an integration of instructional shifts in academic vocabulary and math fluency. Teachers use student work and data to plan and refine curricula and academic tasks.

Impact
Teachers use various curricula and build coherence by using the Common Core Learning Standards (Common Core) and content standards. College and career readiness support all students so that a diversity of learners including English Language Learners (ELLs) and students with disabilities have access to the curricula with engagement.

Supporting Evidence

- School leaders and faculty ensure that curricula align to the Common Core and content standards in order to build coherence and promote college and career readiness for all students as shared in unit plans. Since school leaders and teachers strive to align their curricula to the Common Core, they have adopted several programs that augment and support student skill development across the school to develop college and career readiness. Thus, the English Language Arts (ELA) curriculum is a combination of a university-developed reading and writing program coupled with a phonics support initiative. Additionally, school leaders and faculty infused, the 5 Pillars in Literacy, phonemic awareness, phonics, vocabulary, fluency, and reading comprehension in their ELA curriculum. The math program is a combination of a conceptually based hands-on program in kindergarten through grade two with a problem-based program where students work through an instructional model that articulates engagement, exploration, explanation, elaboration, and evaluation as the steps to solving math challenges in grades three through five. In social studies, teachers implement Passport Core Curriculum and Amplify Core Curriculum in science.

- School leaders and teachers made purposeful decisions to build coherence among grade levels by developing priority standards at each grade level from grade one through grade five. Last year, school leaders after analyzing school testing data and State test results, realized that students were lacking in foundational skills in grades one through four, especially in understanding base ten operations. To strengthen conceptual understanding in math, school leaders and teachers introduced a new hands-on program with more discussion to build a stronger foundation in grades kindergarten through two.

- Teachers plan and refine curricula and academic tasks using student work and data including the iReady data in math and reading. For example, in grade-three reading, of 28 students who completed the baseline assessment in the fall, 18 students scored at grade-level or above, nine students scored two grades below with one student scoring three or more grades below. Teachers reported that they modify curricula by using in-class observations, assessments, Fountas and Pinnell (F&P) running records, and technology. These tools help guide instruction and make adjustments. As demonstrated in a lesson plan, the teacher noted provisions for additional support for this subgroup, some of whom work with a paraprofessional during the lessons. The teachers of English Language Learners (ELLs) plan and modify curricula to meet their students’ needs with accommodations that include access to Spanish language materials in ELA, visuals, and hands-on instruction with digital tablets that are used for translations. Students with disabilities are able to utilize peer assistance.
Additional Finding

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

Across most classrooms, student work products and discussions reflect small group instruction and the workshop model.

Impact

Students produce meaningful work products especially writing samples and small group discussions that reflect high levels of student thinking and participation.

Supporting Evidence

- Teachers embed most teaching practices in the workshop model with small group instruction that reflects the articulated set of beliefs about how students learn best as they develop mastery and independence in a supportive environment. The core beliefs for students are to foster active citizenship and thinkers engaged in improving life in a democratic society. Teachers expect students to explore and question the world around them with an understanding of different perspectives. Further, students learn to take responsibility, not only for their individual actions but also for the community at large. Most observed classrooms used a modified version of the workshop model where the teacher introducing and modeling, whole group engagement with turn and talk discussions that led to small group follow-up or independent student work. In a grade two writing class, students focused on “What does it mean to reflect?” After the teacher modeled using her own writing, students reflected on their teacher’s writing and worked with partners to share their own ideas and then shared out as a group.

- The instructional focus is developing academic discourse and making thinking visible. In a grade one class, during choice time in science, focused on animal and plant defenses, one student selected activity centered on students using various common objects like toothpicks, cotton balls, hair combs, clay, and Legos in order to create models of animal and their defenses that could be used to protect themselves. The conversations were engaging and reflective of the task. One student stated when asked how they could show animal defenses, “We are making models and putting stuff to protect itself from predators.” The students acted out the predator versus prey conflict using their animal models to see which defenses were effective.

- Small group discussion is a key instructional practice that is evident across most classrooms. Students shared the purpose of discussions with their peers, which helped further clarify the teacher’s directions and students’ understanding of the task. These discussions continue at the table with students helping each other with reading, even in the math classes with problems to solve. Another student shared that partner work helps to figure out confusions and summed up the expectations by stating, “Everybody’s role is crucial.” Observed small group discussions in most classes had supports as in sentence prompts, question stems, and charts that describe partner chats. For example, in an upper grades classroom, students had a real-world application of a math problem that involved working in small teams; each group pretended they were dining at a restaurant with a menu. Each group ordered one main dish plus a beverage, added eight percent tax, and a gratuity. Students worked together to decide how the total bill would be divided fairly. Students also participated in key roles as a facilitator, recorder, and/or a presenter. The groups showed engagement as they discussed the problem.
Additional Finding

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

School leaders consistently communicate high expectations and provide training to the entire staff. School leaders and staff effectively communicate expectations to families connected to a path to college and career readiness.

Impact

Communication and professional development center on high expectations have resulted in a culture of mutual accountability. Use of online sharing tools as well as inclusion of parents in school activities supports students in their progress toward college and career readiness.

Supporting Evidence

- School leaders conducted baseline observations and walkthroughs and provided feedback utilizing the Danielson Framework for Teaching as the standard for professionalism and high-quality instruction. Through a series of weekly newsletters to faculty, school leadership articulate focused areas of expectations, including descriptions, examples, look-fors and expected outcomes. The topics range from the logistics of the week to a listing of priority standards for the month with instructional implications located in the section entitled “Practices of a highly effective educator in a student-centered classroom.” Within each component are descriptions of teachers’ actions, the background knowledge needed by the teacher, and indicators or evidence of the component, as it would appear within a lesson or unit of study. In this way, teachers and school leaders have created opportunities for mutual accountability through Progressive Redesign Opportunity Schools for Excellence (PROSE) committee meetings and discussions, walkthroughs, and shared instructional practices.

- According to school leaders and teachers, the ultimate goal of PD is to improve student learning. For example, teachers learned walkthrough protocols in which they provide each other feedback regarding observations. During the grade-one team observation, the team exemplified mutual accountability for instructional expectations. Teachers shared their problem-solving approach to the school-adopted phonics program. In addition, teachers shared their approach to dictation as a way to support and assess students’ phonetic letter-sound capabilities. Teachers regularly provide feedback to and amongst each other so that they hold themselves and their peers accountable for meeting their collaborative planning expectations.

- School leaders and staff effectively communicate expectations to families through newsletters, the school website, as well as through mobile device apps used for the sharing of assignments, information, photos, and communication. All tools clearly outline the expectations for students being able to think critically, work independently and as a team, and be able to persevere through challenging tasks. During the parent meeting, parents shared that communication is two-way and that they feel empowered to collaborate with the school. One parent said, “Having the app on my phone means I can check in every day and see how my daughter is doing. I have something to ask her about when she gets home.” Another parent shared as a new parent to the school with her appreciation of the level of communication and partnering with the school when she shared, “The school fosters a sense of community with a whole new set of friends and a sense of community with help.”
Findings
The majority of teachers are engaged in structured, inquiry-based PROSE professional collaborations. Teacher teams consistently analyze assessment data and student work.

Impact
Professional collaborations promote the achievement of school goals, strengthening the instructional capacity of teachers and progress toward goals for groups of students.

Supporting Evidence
- School leaders reported that classroom teachers meet in grade level inquiry teams to discuss student work and assessment data. Teachers identify instructional shifts, such as academic vocabulary and fluency, and priority standards during these meetings. Teachers revise the curriculum maps, pacing calendars, and lesson plans based on the information obtained in the inquiry meetings. Vertically aligned teams exist as in the PROSE teacher teams. These teams are instructionally focused and interdisciplinary in order to improve pedagogical practice and student learning outcomes. One of the school’s goals is that all teachers will demonstrate teaching practices throughout the school that reflects their beliefs about how students learn best as evidenced in teacher team meeting agenda, meeting minutes, and in discussions with teachers. According to posted agenda, some teams were concerned about needing more time for independent reading for students. Teachers made a decision to combine literacy centers and reading together to create more flexibility while maintaining the workshop approach. Teachers shared during their team meetings that they are growing instructionally through learning from each other.

- During a grade-one teacher team observation, one of the items shared referred to informational chapter books that the students have written. The larger portion of the meeting was dedicated to phonics work and identifying those students who have not yet met mastery. Teachers shared possible root causes such as chronic absences and next steps. In the course of developing a plan of action, teachers discussed tracking systems as ways to capture more of what students were able to do and say during phonics practice. Teachers shared data as to the status of student progress to date in order to frame the discussion. The focus is those students who receive additional supports and their progress to date, which showed improved performance but still lagged behind others. In other team meeting minutes, teachers discussed how they collaborate with each other and listed “popping” into each other’s rooms, sharing resources and going over their shared pacing calendar. Decisions were made to dedicate time to discuss obstacles and determine what help or support they will need as a team to problem-solve concerns. They also wanted to norm their report cards to ensure that there would be a shared expectation about how and in what ways they should complete these documents. This evidence illustrates the desire of the teams to “speak with one voice” and support each other through their teaching tasks that have led to teacher instructional improvement as stated by teachers and school leadership.

- Teacher teams present and analyze data regularly throughout the year as grade-level teams and as PROSE vertical teams. Teachers analyzed NYS assessments in order to determine growth in goal areas of math and reading for all students, but specifically for those students with disabilities. Because of the inquiry work and improved PD, students with disabilities on the NYS ELA assessments for 2017-2018 increased from 54 percent at levels 3 and 4 to 63 percent, an increase of nine percentage points. Teachers and school leaders attest to teacher improvement this school year in instructional practice as discussed with a focus on improved student engagement and classroom rigor.