Quality Review Report

2018-2019

P.S. 234 Independence School
Elementary 02M234
292 Greenwich Street
Manhattan
NY 10007

Principal: Dana Rappaportchaqor

Dates of Review:
November 8, 2018 - November 9, 2018

Lead Reviewer: Jacqueline King-Robinson
The Quality Review Report

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

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

Information about the School


School Quality Ratings

### Instructional Core

<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>1.1 Ensure engaging, rigorous, and coherent curricula in all subjects, accessible for a variety of learners and aligned to Common Core Learning Standards and/or content standards</td>
<td>Additional Finding</td>
<td>Well Developed</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1.2 Develop teacher pedagogy from a coherent set of beliefs about how students learn best that is informed by the instructional shifts and Danielson Framework for Teaching, aligned to the curricula, engaging, and meets the needs of all learners so that all students produce meaningful work products</td>
<td>Additional Finding</td>
<td>Well Developed</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2.2 Align assessments to curricula, use on-going assessment and grading practices, and analyze information on student learning outcomes to adjust instructional decisions at the team and classroom levels</td>
<td>Additional Finding</td>
<td>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>Area of Celebration</td>
<td>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</td>
<td>Well Developed</td>
</tr>
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## Systems for Improvement

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>To what extent does the school...</th>
<th>Area</th>
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<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>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>Well Developed</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5.1 Evaluate the quality of school-level decisions, making adjustments as needed to increase the coherence of policies and practices across the school, with particular attention to the CCLS</td>
<td>Area of Focus</td>
<td>Proficient</td>
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</tbody>
</table>
### Area of Celebration

<table>
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<tr>
<th>Quality Indicator:</th>
<th>1.4 Positive Learning Environment</th>
<th>Rating:</th>
<th>Well Developed</th>
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#### Findings

The school’s approach to culture-building is informed by a theory of action that is guided by a schoolwide focus of creating responsive classrooms that promote student independence. School staff receives professional development to inform their approach to the discipline and social-emotional support given to students.

#### Impact

A focus on developing student independence and positive discipline results in a safe and inclusive environment where all constituents have a meaningful voice. Staff and family are supported and students have adopted effective academic and personal behaviors.

#### Supporting Evidence

- Beginning in the 2012 school year, staff implemented *Responsive Classroom* (RC) curricula across all grades to develop coherent practices that foster accountability in student behavior. During the summer of 2018, seven teachers attended training around the implementation of the RC curricula and how to provide support to their peers for its application. Practices such as morning meeting, afternoon meeting, read aloud and discussions allow students to start their day as a community promoting the feeling of being connected and welcomed by the group, as well as providing a safe space for conversations about students’ social-emotional experiences.

- The school community strategically aligns professional learning opportunities, family outreach and supports that lead to students’ adoption of effective academic and personal behaviors. During the teacher team meeting, teachers spoke of multiple opportunities available to them including designing your own training, diversity professional learning, cross-grade social-emotional learning sessions and time to develop and sustain the schoolwide *Responsive Classroom* Initiative. Parents spoke highly of the constant communication by teachers and staff, and particularly about the staffs’ availability to speak with them about their children’s progress.

- Across all grades and throughout each classroom a warm and respectful environment promotes high levels of student engagement and several adults, including school leaders, demonstrate positive communications and rapport with students. Furthermore, school leaders encourage students to take an active role in school improvement initiatives. Each class has representatives that work with school staff to develop rules conventions for the classrooms and shared spaces including the halls, lunchrooms and yard. Students described the development of the rules convention as a debate about the rules, in order to come to consensus. A schoolwide consistent language around rules and expectations, as well as pedagogical practices ensures a coherent approach to culture building and social emotional support. Kindergarten students are assigned to a fifth grade buddy throughout the year. Fifth grade buddies spend the first week of school shadowing their kindergarten buddies at lunchtime to teach them the rules conventions for lunch and recess. A fifth grade student explained, “There is an honor and buddy system, they trust us to be alone.”
Area of Focus

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Quality Indicator:</th>
<th>5.1 Monitoring and Revising Systems</th>
<th>Rating:</th>
<th>Proficient</th>
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Findings

School staff regularly completes curriculum reflection forms to assess the quality of the curriculum. School leaders review data from the Online Occurrence Reporting System (OORS) weekly to assess the impact of student behavior on meeting the expectations of Common Core Learning Standards.

Impact

The school leaders’ monitoring and revising of structures enable staff to regularly adjust curricula practices, apply collaborative behavior management strategies and adjust professional development to support student learning needs and mastery of Common Core Learning Standards. However, there are some lapses in purposeful evaluation leading to further revisions in school culture and across all content areas to meet the expectations of the Common Core.

Supporting Evidence

- Consultant instructional coaches complete daily work logs that require them to identify participants, professional development activities, next steps for teachers and school leaders, as well as next steps for themselves. A literacy consultant’s work log included both looking at student writing pieces in order to plan for the upcoming coaching cycle and working with the integrated co-teachers to plan for writing during the first cycle. All logs reviewed evidence adjustments to instructional practices to include shared reading. A dedicated literacy coach meets with teachers and has the responsibility of supporting teachers to make instructional adjustments. Subsequently, school leaders meet with the literacy coach to review the adjustments and ensure instructional practices meet student learning needs. However, this focus is only for English Language Arts and math, and not yet extended to other content areas.

- Teachers refer students who fail to meet schoolwide behavioral expectations to the Pupil Personnel Team (PPT) via a PPT referral form submitted to the team. The PPT employs Response to Intervention (RtI) processes to identify interventions for individual students that includes conducting an observation to determine if further screening is needed. Six to eight weeks after application of collaborative interventions the observer meets with the teacher to assess whether the interventions are working. If the interventions are not working, new interventions are discussed, and decisions are made about a referral for additional services. Interventions for one student included being able to take body breaks. Students were observed throughout the hallways taking breaks as needed. During which they have access to trampolines and other structured activities. Review of OORS data evidence a zero percent suspension rate for the past two years. However, full inclusion of student voice in understanding and revising school culture to support learning is not yet part of the process.

- School leaders conduct joint observations to norm the feedback that teachers receive from formal and informal observations to ensure that the feedback captures strengths, areas in need of improvement, and next steps that are aligned to the Danielson Framework for Teaching. Observation feedback from school leaders and colleagues results in adjustments to teachers’ instructional practices and informs teacher teamwork. Feedback to one teacher was, “During our feedback conversation, we spoke about connecting your teaching point in guided reading to a skill that students can do independently in other books. Teaching students to ask questions to help make predictions or to understand a character better might help students generalize the idea of question asking as they read other books. It also focuses the lesson on a skill that can be articulated and practiced.” School leaders utilize data from observations to design professional learning opportunities and drive the work of teacher teams in order to promote pedagogical strategies that support student mastery of Common Core Standards.
**Additional Finding**

<table>
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<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 staff have adopted curricula across content areas that align to the Common Core Learning Standards, incorporate rigorous habits and require students to take an inquiry approach to learning. Teachers use student assessment data and work products to make adjustments to the curricula.

**Impact**

Schoolwide interdisciplinary studies result in coherence across grades and subject areas through project-based learning that promotes college and career readiness. All students including English Language Learners, (ELLs) and students with Individualized Education Programs (IEPs) have access to rigorous academic tasks that promote cognitive engagement and require them to demonstrate their thinking.

**Supporting Evidence**

- All unit and lesson plans reviewed included the Common Core Learning Standards that are to be addressed and their connection to the content standards. Curricula documents provide evidence of a focus on developing students’ academic vocabulary, analyzing text and primary source documents, making a claim and supporting it with text-based evidence. Planning documents include strategies for differentiating academic tasks based on student work and assessment data, so diverse learners, including English Language Learners (ELLs) have access to the curricula. English as a New Language (ENL) units are aligned to the reading units from the ELA curriculum to promote access. Based on a review of student work from prior tasks, an interdisciplinary unit included student groupings for targeted-instruction to teach strategies for determining the meaning of unfamiliar words.

- Driven by a schoolwide instructional focus on developing students into self-directed learners, teachers create lessons that require students to self-assess, peer review, provide feedback to their peers, revise work products and make claims supported with evidence. Consequently, this reflects an instructional shift. Furthermore, units require students to develop questions they want to answer as they learn. Lessons across content areas require students to take an inquiry-based research approach using non-fiction reading and writing, oral communication and artistic expression to demonstrate their learning. Thus, units promote rigorous tasks that require critical thinking and demonstration of higher-order thinking skills in a variety of ways.

- Teacher teams collaboratively plan academic tasks that emphasize rigorous habits and higher-order thinking skills. Academic tasks are differentiated to include scaffolds, visuals, manipulatives, and strategic grouping. As a result, students are assigned to differentiated groups based on readiness levels. Academic tasks are not only planned but also adjusted to provide access for all students as evidenced in the planning documents reviewed. During the teacher team meeting, teachers were observed looking at student work from a math assessment to determine adjustments that need to be made to clarify student misconceptions. Teachers identified next steps for groups of students that included providing them with visual models that matched the equations. Planning for differentiated activities is evident across grades and subjects resulting in cognitive engagement for all students.
### Additional Finding

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<tr>
<th>Quality Indicator:</th>
<th>1.2 Pedagogy</th>
<th>Rating:</th>
<th>Well Developed</th>
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### Findings

Across all classrooms, teaching practices are aligned to the curricula and reflect the schoolwide belief that students learn best when engaged in inquiry-based self-directed learning. High levels of student participation and ownership was evident in all classrooms visited.

### Impact

Work products and discussion structures are reflective of the workshop approach to teaching and foster high levels of student thinking. Students have choice in demonstrating their new learnings which promotes high levels of engagement and student ownership of their learning.

### Supporting Evidence

- During a visit to a fifth-grade math class the teacher took the complex idea of dividing fractions and grounded it in what students already know about dividing whole numbers. Students were asked “What is the connection between fractions and division?” One student responded, “Fractions are a part of something bigger than itself.” The teacher modeled student thinking by drawing a kinder egg on the board to be shared with six people. Subsequently, the teacher changed the value from one to 18 and students were able to use multiplication and division to demonstrate that three is one-sixth of 18. The teacher connected the learning within the concepts so that students could build their new understanding on concepts previously learned, which supported students in demonstrating their understanding.

- In a visit to a grade three integrated co-teaching (ICT) class, students were observed annotating text about Washington and the caisson workers during the sinking of the second caisson on the New York side of the river. The teacher modeled using the *Heart of It*, a summarizing strategy, to identify the main idea of the text. Students were provided with texts differentiated by reading level about the New York caisson. Students chose the strategy they would like to use to identify the main idea of their selected text. When asked by the reviewer which strategy they chose, a student responded, “We underlined the words for the main idea, separated the article into sections and drew an illustration for each section.” Another student stated, “We related it to the *Mine Craft* and used the three, two, one strategy. Three vocabulary words, two summary statements and one illustration. It is helpful for reading it helps you get the new information.” Student responses evidenced that all students had ownership of their learning, promoting engagement in cognitive tasks and conversations about the text that evidence rigor.

- Across the vast majority of classrooms visited, students were expected to make conjectures and support them with evidence. In a visit to a fifth grade ICT math class, students were observed using manipulatives to determine if fractions are greater than, less than or equal to one half. Students were using snap cube models to support their reasoning about the relationship to one half of different fractions. One student stated, “It is only one eighth from being equal to one half.” Consequently, teachers provide students with clear expectations around using an inquiry approach to support their learning which reflect high levels of thinking in student work products and discussion and align to the schoolwide belief of how students learn best.
Findings
Across classrooms, teachers use assessments, rubrics, and checklists that are aligned to the curricula to get a clear picture of student progress and to provide needed feedback. Teachers’ assessment practices include the use of trackers to capture classroom-level and common assessment data.

Impact
High quality assessment practices at the classroom and schoolwide level yield data and feedback that teachers use to develop small groups for targeted instruction and Academic Intervention Services (AIS). Teachers provide students with actionable feedback that supports them in improving their work.

Supporting Evidence

- The school administers pre- and post-unit assessments in reading and writing. After administration teachers do skills analyses and interpret the data. They identify areas of strength, target skills, and implications for the instruction provided to students. The data is also used to place students in small groups for guided instruction and identify students in need of AIS. Fantasy book club assignments from a fifth-grade class were based on the results from running records, the fantasy writing pre-assessment and conferencing notes. During the student meeting, one student stated, “The school does everything really well. They know when to give you assistance.”

- Rubrics and checklists are provided for all formal and informal assessments. In all classes visited rubrics were observed on all posted work, as well as being used by students to complete classroom tasks. Several students stated that the rubrics and checklists help them to make their work better. Teachers also agreed that students use rubrics to measure their progress towards completing a task. When asked if they receive feedback about what they need to improve, all students agreed that they receive feedback on every piece of work. One student stated, “Our feedback is based on self-assessment, peer-assessment and teacher assessment. Sometimes we share with a partner and they give us feedback, but I like to get feedback from the teacher one-on-one.”

- Teachers use trackers to analyze student progress towards grade-level benchmarks. Data trackers include the benchmarks for the current unit, assessment that was used, the date the assessment was administered, identification of the questions that align to each benchmark, student proficiency level for each benchmark and what will be the next teaching point for groups of students. Teachers provide feedback to the students that enables them to establish goals and assess their progress towards meeting those goals.
Additional Finding

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<th>Quality Indicator:</th>
<th>4.2 Teacher Teams and Leadership Development</th>
<th>Rating:</th>
<th>Well Developed</th>
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</table>

Findings

All teachers are engaged in inquiry-based grade level teams. Teachers actively address areas of student need that is revealed from the analysis data and student work during meetings.

Impact

Professional collaborations on grade level teams have strengthened the instructional capacity of teachers, increased mastery of goals for students and have resulted in schoolwide instructional coherence.

Supporting Evidence

- School leaders not only participate in bi-weekly grade level team meetings but they also meet with the instructional coaches and participate in the professional development committee, which informs upcoming professional development and individual teacher supports. As an outgrowth, instructional coaches support teacher teams to establish lab sites that support grade level instructional goals. In addition, instructional coaches provide teachers and school leaders with feedback and next steps from the inquiry cycles. Feedback to kindergarten teachers acknowledged their hard work in cycle number one, identified pre-work needed to be completed prior to next meeting, as well as the identification of the lab sites for inquiry cycle two. Consequently, collaborative inquiry supports the schoolwide instructional goals and coherence of practices.

- Teacher teams analyze student work and assessment data to identify students in need of AIS. Identified students are assigned to an AIS provider who provides targeted instruction to support them in meeting grade-level benchmarks. Providing students with targeted intervention has resulted in mastery of grade-level benchmarks for groups of students across the school. School assessment data for students with disabilities reveal that 68 percent are performing at or above grade-level in math and 60 percent at or above grade-level for ELA.

- Teacher team meeting agendas reveal that vertical team meetings positively impact the maintaining of coherence grade-to-grade in the administering of assessments and reviewing student work. All teachers agreed that the vertical team meetings help them to better understand writing structure, craft and conventions across the grade levels, as well as calibrate their assessment practices against the Teachers College Narrative Progressions and the Common Core Learning Standards. Teacher reflection forms from the looking at student work vertical meeting required teachers to identify what they learned from each round and the implications for their practice. One teacher’s learnings included a need to have continuity of language during instruction, when assigning tasks and providing students with feedback across grade levels and that looking across the grades was an interesting comparison. The next steps included finding and using more mentor texts to support student writing. All teachers agree that the work on their teacher teams has strengthened their instructional capacity.