Quality Review Report

2018-2019

P.S. 117 J. Keld / Briarwood School
Elementary 28Q117
85-15 143 Street
Queens
NY 11435

Principal: Paula Cunningham

Dates of Review:
February 13, 2019 - February 14, 2019

Lead Reviewer: Daniel Kim
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. 117 J. Keld / Briarwood School serves students in grade PK through grade 5. You will find information about this school, including enrollment, attendance, student demographics, and data regarding academic performance, at http://schools.nyc.gov/Accountability/tools/report/default.htm.

School Quality Ratings

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Instructional Core</th>
<th>Area</th>
<th>Rating</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>To what extent does the school...</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1.1 Ensure engaging, rigorous, and coherent curricula in all subjects, accessible for a variety of learners and aligned to Common Core Learning Standards and/or content standards</td>
<td>Area of Focus</td>
<td>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>Additional Finding</td>
<td>Proficient</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
## School Quality Ratings continued

### School Culture

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>To what extent does the school...</th>
<th>Area</th>
<th>Rating</th>
</tr>
</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>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>
</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>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>Area of Celebration</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>Additional Finding</td>
<td>Proficient</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Area of Celebration

| Quality Indicator: | 4.2 Teacher Teams and Leadership Development | Rating: Well Developed |

Findings

Teacher teams, including grade and vertical instructional teams, systematically analyze key elements of work through the Objective, Reflective, Interpretive and Decision, (ORID), protocol to hone instructional practice based on student work and assessments. Distributed leadership structures are embedded.

Impact

Teacher team work results in shared improvements in teacher practice and mastery of goals for groups of students. Teachers’ integral role in key decisions affect student learning across the school.

Supporting Evidence

- During the teacher team observation, as part of an inquiry cycle, grade-three teachers used the ORID protocol to examine the performance of three representative students identified as the Terrific Three: one performing beyond mastery, one at performance standards, and one performing below standards. Teacher analysis began with the assessment of student work products relative to a schoolwide problem-solving rubric. Teachers noted student successes in using a problem-solving protocol and asked clarifying and probing questions to understand the work context. They then offered possible instructional changes such as revisiting how students constructed their problem-solving plan and deconstructing the rubric components to emphasize skills for groups of students. The meeting concluded with instructional suggestions and identifying additional data to be collected for future presentations relative to all students who exhibit similar patterns and trends in their learning. The instructional focus of this teacher team has resulted in improved student performance according to GO Math! assessments, with the percentage of students performing at or above grade level almost doubling from 27 percent at the start of the year to 52 percent on the most recent benchmarks.

- Teachers across the school conduct inquiry into their instructional practices through student work analyses, in alignment with the schoolwide instructional focus to elevate math instruction. For example, grade five teachers examined student performance for their Terrific Threes on an end-of-unit performance task, and noted across the grade some students were not using or applying the Understand, Plan, Solve, Check, (UPSC), protocol or other strategies, most notably that students were not communicating their strategies effectively. Conversely, they noted that students above grade level were effectively using the protocol and solving problems using multiple strategies. In addition to determining instructional changes, meeting minutes reveal teachers solving the next performance task themselves to plan for anticipated challenges and misconceptions. In a grade five math lesson observed during this review, students were engaging in the afore-mentioned teacher-team planned performance task, supported with graphic organizers to organize thoughts, problem solving scaffolds, discussion sentence starters for academic discourse, as well as picture supports and manipulatives.

- Distributive leadership practices support teacher work to ensure curricular alignment and key decisions on teaching practices. For example, analyzing student performance data from New York State Math tests, GO Math! benchmark assessments and in-class observations, the math instructional team noted across the grades that students needed additional support in building conceptual understanding and application in problem solving. This vertical team, facilitated and led by teachers with representation from each grade, helped decide the schoolwide instructional focus on math instruction, including setting expectations for student math discourse, common application of a problem-solving protocol across grades and differentiated real-world problem-solving tasks for students to tackle. The implementation of these expectations was evident in all observed math lessons across grades, thus impacting student learning across the school.
## Area of Focus

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Quality Indicator:</th>
<th>1.1 Curriculum</th>
<th>Rating:</th>
<th>Proficient</th>
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### Findings

Curricula consistently emphasize rigorous habits such as application of reading strategies across subject areas and higher-order skills such as problem solving strategies across grades and subjects. Curricula and academic tasks are planned and refined using in-class student work and assessment data such as student reading levels.

### Impact

While a diversity of learners, including English Language Learners (ELLs) and students with disabilities, have access to the curricula and tasks and are cognitively engaged in their work, there are missed opportunities to plan for groups of students who are high achieving to elevate their cognitive engagement.

### Supporting Evidence

- Social studies lesson plans for a grade five class emphasized using close reading strategies to explore visual images of Canadian terrains such as the tundra, boreal forests and Acadian woodland. As the introduction of a new unit, student groups were to explore pictures sub-divided into four areas and collect noticings and wonderings on one of the four quadrants while the other three remained hidden from view. After collaborating on creating questions accumulated over all four quadrants, student triads or quads grouped heterogeneously based on their reading levels, were to present their noticings to another group with a different geographic region to further build exploratory questions for the unit. Planned culminating tasks included students creating a presentation on regional characteristics as well as how the First People adapted to the environment of the region. Thus, tasks within planning documents consistently emphasize rigorous habits and higher-order thinking across grades and subjects.

- Some lesson plans included purposeful extensions for students who were already performing at a high level. For example, for a grade three math lesson on solving a multi-step word problem with whole number division, students were to address a problem relating boats with the number of fishermen. Students were to work on three levels of difficulty, with one group with tiered support with space for drawing visual supports and a check for understanding stop with space for articulating student strategies. A second group was to work on the problem in addition to articulating their plan for problem solving, and a third group of students were to not only solve the given problem but create a problem with similar math thinking. Such planning for meaningful extensions of learning tasks was evident in some but not the vast majority of plans, thus potentially hampering some students developing further their higher order thinking.

- Curricula are designed in a way that allow access for diverse learners by using student work and data. For example, a second-grade reading lesson plan based on student reading levels employs four different self-reflection strategies to support comprehension of longer texts. Planned strategies include asking themselves what the author's purpose was in using specific phrases, including self-assessing whether they read with fluency, or “putting yourself in the shoes of the character” to wonder how the reader would feel in the same situation. Students were to be supported in this work through a parallel group with a reteach on the stop-and-jot strategy, a graphic organizer with differentiated line supports, and specific mini-charts around each of these strategies for groups of students. Small group instruction plans for students who were reading above grade level included building student non-fiction reading skills using text features. Such refinement of academic tasks based on student data for those highest achieving students were evident in some, but not the vast majority of planning documents reviewed.
Findings
Across classrooms, teaching strategies such as the use of differentiated tasks, graphic organizers and scaffolds consistently provide multiple entry points into the curricula.

Impact
All learners, including English Language Learners and students with disabilities, are engaged in appropriately challenging tasks and demonstrate higher-order thinking skills in student work products and discussions.

Supporting Evidence

- Across classes teaching strategies, such as the use of differentiated tasks and scaffolds, provide multiple entry points for a variety of learners, including ELLs and students with disabilities, to challenging academic work. Students in a grade five class solved multi-step world problems using adding and subtracting fraction strategies. In the lesson, students worked in homogeneous groups solving differentiated problems of various levels of difficulty around creating a necklace made of geometric shapes, articulating various strategies including visual fraction models or equations to represent the problem. Student scaffolds included the use of geometric shape manipulatives, multiples charts, academic discourse question and math talk sentence starters, and shape charts to support a variety of learners access the work at hand.

- Student work products across grades and subject areas reflect high levels of thinking. Students in a grade-five English Language Arts lesson worked on comparing two characters from *Esperanza Rising*, with a focus on how character backgrounds such as age, family and previous experiences impact character perspectives and actions. Students worked in partnerships to focus on two characters of their own choosing, gathering text evidence in a graphic organizer to support their rationales in preparation of writing a comparative literary essay. For example, a pair of students examined two characters, Esperanza and Miguel, to compare and contrast the family backgrounds, ages and personal experiences of the two characters. Noting that one came from a wealthy family with servants whereas the other came from a family that had worked as servants, students then collected text evidence from the novel noting reaction by characters to different situations as a result of his/her background.

- Across classrooms, student discussions support not only high levels of thinking but also serve to give peer feedback. In a second grade math lesson, groups of students presented to their peers their math thinking and the strategies that they used to solve differentiated math problems. Students articulated how they used the algorithm, a quick draw, the hundreds chart, a bar model or a visual model to solve the problem at hand. The students then explained their problem solving process, as well as whether or not they had actually answered the question. Second grade audience members posed clarifying questions and evaluated the group’s problem-solving process as measured against the project rubric.
Findings
Teachers create and use common assessments such as GO Math! benchmark and unit assessments and Fountas and Pinnell running records, unit-specific rubrics and grading policies that are aligned to the school’s curricula, to determine student progress towards goals across grades and content areas.

Impact
Teacher use of assessments provides actionable feedback to students and is used to adjust curricula and instruction.

Supporting Evidence

- Across classrooms, teachers use assessments such as running records, GO Math! assessments and performance-based tasks for science and social studies, that are aligned to the school curricula and are administered based on a schoolwide assessment plan. These assessments serve as the basis for feedback to students. Teacher feedback on an on-demand grade five literary essay writing included a checklist articulating expectations for introduction, reasoning and evidence for body paragraphs, efficacy of the conclusion and writing conventions around spelling, transition words and grammar. Specific feedback stated, “[student], your essay is well organized and explained each character’s reaction to the event. Try to include even more transition words.” Peer feedback on the same work stated, “I liked how you explained each of their feelings nice and carefully so I (the reader) can understand.”

- School leaders and teachers use common assessments such as the Fountas & Pinnell reading assessments, GO Math! Assessments, as well as New York State English Language Arts and math tests to determine student progress towards goals and adjust instructional practices to support student learning. For example, school leaders noted in previous years that students across the grades were not making as much progress in math from the start of the year to the end of the year, particularly around math problem solving. To address this concern, school leaders and teachers implemented protocols such as the Understand the problem, Plan your solution, Solve your problem and Check, (UPS Check), across grades to hone student strategies solving word problems. Student use and/or classroom artifacts of problem-solving strategies were evident in all observed classes.

- Teachers gather data and analyze trends in student performance and progress to adjust instruction. For example, plans for a grade five math lesson around solving adding and subtracting word problems with fractions relied on chapter formative assessments that determined student mastery of fractional number sense. This information was used to form student math triads to solve math problems of three different levels of difficulty in addition to helping to create picture supports, identifying success criteria, developing scaffolds for student academic discourse and ensuring peer feedback for groups of students as appropriate. Such plans that utilized student work to formulate differentiated tasks and supports was consistent in viewed instructional planning documents across grades and content areas.
Additional Finding

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Quality Indicator:</th>
<th>3.4 High Expectations</th>
<th>Rating:</th>
<th>Well Developed</th>
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**Findings**

School leaders and staff consistently communicate high expectations for teaching and learning across the school through a variety of methods and forums such as the Home School Connection Curriculum Newsletters. All staff members effectively communicate expectations to families and partner with them to support their children in meeting college and career readiness goals.

**Impact**

A culture of shared accountability supports teaching and learning through professional development and contributes to strong partnerships among staff and families, which leads to student progress towards meeting high expectations.

**Supporting Evidence**

- School leaders articulate high expectations for all staff through faculty conferences, memos, individual and team conversations, and a PS 117 Staff Handbook that details expectations related to instruction, professional development (PD), and areas of school operations. School leaders meet regularly with teachers individually to review professional growth, expectations for high quality teaching as well as to plan strategic assignments for intervisitations. School leaders further reinforce expectations by providing all teachers with PD support to improve questioning and discussion and in-class assessment practices. To expand capacity in delivering effective instruction, all teachers receive feedback in relation to best practices aligned to the Danielson Framework for Teaching. Teachers shared that administrators give clear and detailed feedback in identifying current classroom practices through transcriptions of in-class dialogues and provide concrete examples that have resulted in improved practice. For example, a teacher shared ways they have shifted practice based on feedback so that students first verbalize in pairs their plans for math problem solving as a means to practice before application. This change in practice was evident in observations within this review.

- Through individual and team discussions at grade, department, and common planning meetings, staff members receive comprehensive professional development support aligned to their needs and interests. Teacher teams collaborate to develop and share curriculum maps, units of study, lesson plans, data collection sheets and templates for analyzing student work through a variety of means including online platforms, which helps to build capacity to meet high expectations for instruction, communication, and professionalism by all. Interviewed teachers related that teachers hold each other mutually accountable for not only consistent content pacing across the grade, but also alerting colleagues if unexpected student misconceptions or “learning bumps” arise from lessons that were taught slightly earlier than other classes.

- Staff members communicate expectations connected to a path to college and career readiness to families through a variety of means such as the Home School Connection Curriculum Newsletters, grading policy, open house nights, the principal’s Cocoa, Cookies and Conversation, online platforms and individualized personal contacts. Parents shared ways they successfully and concretely partner with the school to support their children at home. A parent related that she received guidance on how to build her son’s writing at home through the strategies being used in class such as re-reading parts of the story to make sure it makes sense, and the student was recently recognized as a student of the month in expressive writing. Another parent shared that her child translated her learning around computer presentation tools from her literacy project to home, and with the guidance of teachers the student and parent created a slide presentation of their recent vacation.
Additional Finding

<table>
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<tr>
<th>Quality Indicator:</th>
<th>4.1 Teacher Support and Supervision</th>
<th>Rating:</th>
<th>Well Developed</th>
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</table>

Findings
School leaders and faculty support the development of all teachers through strategic cycles of observations according to grade bands and instructional expertise. Teachers receive feedback that accurately captures their strengths, challenges and outlines next steps using the Danielson Framework for Teaching.

Impact
Teachers receive feedback that articulates clear expectations for their practice, aligns with their professional goals and supports their development.

Supporting Evidence

- School leaders align observations in cycles around grade bands so that supervisory responsibilities are strategically aligned to assistant principal assignments that loop with students from year-to-year, resulting in multi-year experiences with students and families to support consistent feedback and build schoolwide coherence. Observation reports articulate student work products through direct quotes and discussion transcripts, as aligned to the schoolwide instructional focus to elevate student math thinking through discussion. Further analysis of student achievement is conducted with staff both one-on-one and via grade meetings with school administrators during which they identify patterns and trends for individual and groups of students including ELLs and students with disabilities on benchmark assessments, along with needed specific instructional moves for sub-groups of students. Thus, school leaders’ strategic and frequent cycles of support and observations serve as the basis for teacher improvement and for peers to support each other to build instructional practices.

- Feedback accurately captures strengths as identified as commendable aspects or glows, challenges are described as pivotal areas of concern or grows, and next steps align to the Danielson Framework for Teaching. For example, one teacher observation report noted a glow area for Designing Coherent Instruction, with planned application of the schoolwide problem-solving protocol. Next steps aligned to the schoolwide instruction focus included “pose questions and plan differentiated tiered activities that will strengthen student practice with applying strategies which require them to explain their thinking. Encourage students to make visual representations, to utilize manipulatives and to talk about the steps they need to take.” Such feedback results in teacher development and changes in teacher practice. In a visit to this teacher’s classroom during the review, students were observed working on differentiated tasks supported by various content and discussion scaffolds, articulating their problem-solving strategies and questioning the efficacy of peer strategies.

- Feedback to teachers aligns with teacher goals to support teacher growth as evidenced by review of observations. Artifacts for a grade four teacher included individual goal setting at the start of the school year towards math instruction, utilizing assessments such as the June Instructional reports to identify student needs for small group instruction and hone her parallel teaching strategies towards more rigorous tasks. A fall observation highlighted her practices in creating concrete representations for students for regrouping, as well as structures in place for student-to-student discussions. Teacher reflections for a subsequent lesson revealed the application of the 3-Reads protocol to deepen student understanding and comprehension of word problems, in reflection of feedback to help uncover student misconceptions. This pattern of alignment between teacher goals, feedback from observations and changes in instructional practice was consistent through the review of artifacts.