Quality Review Report

2018-2019

Jamaica Children's School
Elementary 28Q312
109-20 Union Hall Street
Queens
NY 11433

Principal: Suzanne Schatz

Dates of Review:
January 24, 2019 - January 25, 2019

Lead Reviewer: Carlos Perez
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

Jamaica Children’s School serves students in grade K through grade 4. 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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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>To what extent does the school...</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>
</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>
</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>
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</tbody>
</table>
### School Quality Ratings continued

#### 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</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>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

#### Systems for Improvement

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

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Area</th>
<th>Rating</th>
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</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>
</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>
</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>
</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>
</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>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Findings
The school’s approach to culture-building and social-emotional supports embodies a theory of action which indicates that trust between teachers and students is essential in promoting learning by all students. There are varied structures for accelerating students’ academic and social development.

Impact
Student voice is actively cultivated and meaningfully involved in schoolwide decisions and improvement efforts and a broad range of guidance and advisement activities fuel academic and personal growth by all students.

Supporting Evidence

- Restorative circles are one of the key structures that support students’ social-emotional needs and have a positive impact on students’ personal behaviors. Students shared that if they have a concern, they ask for and are allowed to participate in a restorative circle, which gives them an opportunity to address their concern. During the school visit, students expressed how “safe and secure” they feel in “our school”. Several students shared that, “Teachers always know how we are feeling because they ask us every day.” Each student is well known by at least one adult, including the school leader. At a meeting with students, they all stated that the school leader is the first person they see every morning and she shakes each student’s hand and greets the student by name. Additionally, students in all classrooms participate in morning meetings where they can share anything that is on their minds. Teachers explained how one student recently shared the experience of being in foster care and other students were able to ask questions. One student also shared how morning meetings helped to improve her attendance, as one of the main reasons she is coming to school regularly is that she does not like to miss morning meetings.

- A theory of action across the school is that no learning can take place if there is no trust between teachers and students and all staff members believe that no learning can take place unless students’ social-emotional needs are first met. This is addressed daily through the morning meetings between teachers and students. In addition, all staff and students explained that voice is one of the school’s core values, so student voice is considered integral to decision making, schoolwide, and getting regular feedback from students is a standard practice in the school. For example, at the start of the school year students create classroom rules based on what they felt worked and what didn’t, in the prior year. Students also expressed wanting more variety in their end-of-unit projects, leading to the students being allowed to select their own final project. Further, when some students found out that staff members were in the process of interviewing for a new teacher, the students took it upon themselves to prepare a list of what they wanted in a new teacher and shared the list with the interview committee.

- The school has an attendance action plan that goes into effect each time a student’s attendance gets flagged for any reason. The attendance team makes personal phone calls and sends emails and texts to families every morning, for every student that is absent. The school’s attendance team meets monthly, analyzes attendance data on a weekly basis, and identities students whose attendance is not meeting attendance goals, in order to develop individualized attendance plans for those students. For example, members of the attendance team have been working with a student whose attendance was 70 percent last year. Through their guidance and intervention work, this same student has an 85 percent attendance rate to date.
Area of Focus

| Quality Indicator: | 1.2 Pedagogy | Rating: | Well Developed |

Findings
Across the vast majority of classrooms, teaching practices are aligned to the curricula and reflect a coherent set of beliefs about how students learn best, most notably through discourse that regularly engages students in rigorous discussions. Missed opportunities for students to engage in group and partner discussions were noted in only one of the classrooms visited.

Impact
In alignment to the Danielson *Framework for Teaching*, teaching practices across the vast majority of classrooms result in student work products and discussions that reflect high levels of student thinking, participation and ownership.

Supporting Evidence

- Teachers in most of the classrooms visited, provided students with ample opportunities to engage in discussion. During a second-grade math lesson, students came to the document camera and were able to discuss their math problems and why they chose a specific way of solving a problem. In addition, the teacher posed questions pertaining to the students' work and asked the students to turn to a partner and discuss their ideas. For example, the teacher asked the students to explain why their classmate constructed their problem to read, “7+ =13?” As students spoke, they were overheard sharing, “He did this so that he can find the missing number”. Similarly, during a fourth-grade math lesson, students worked in small groups and engaged in discussion throughout the entire visit. In addition, one student worked with a small group in order to help those students who needed additional support in simplifying fractions. By contrast, in a third-grade literacy class which was observed during the review, there was little evidence of student discourse.

- Work products that exhibit high levels of student thinking, participation, and ownership of learning, were seen throughout the school. During math classes students could be seen creating number lines on individual white boards that they used as a reference tool during the lesson. During those same math classes, desks were used as dry erase boards that allowed students to create mathematical equations. First-grade students created, illustrated, and published their own books that included a glossary of key academic terminology. Similar high-quality work products were routinely seen on bulletin boards throughout classrooms visited, in hallways, and in student portfolios viewed in a meeting with students.

- In alignment to the Danielson *Framework for Teaching*, teaching practices in the vast majority of classrooms reflected the schoolwide belief that students learn best through student-centered instruction. During a second grade, Integrated Co-Teaching (ICT) Science, Technology, Engineering, and Math (STEM) lesson, students constructed a top and identified the necessary components that made it spin. The students worked in groups and actively discussed the steps taken to construct the top. Students who were successful in the project served as teachers of other students who needed assistance in completing their tops, while the teacher served as the facilitator of activities by other students across the room. During this lesson, the teacher checked in with groups, questioned students, and assessed their progress. During a kindergarten literacy class, students worked in pairs, identified words with similar sounds, and explained why those words were similar. For example, one group of students shared how “sat” and “cat” are similar “because they both end with “at.””
### Additional Finding

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

All staff members ensure that curricula are aligned to the Common Core Learning Standards and strategically integrate instructional shifts, including fluency in the math curriculum. Curricula and academic tasks are planned and refined using student work and assessment data.

#### Impact

Across grades and subject areas, there is coherence of curricula that promotes college and career readiness for all students. All students have access to curricula and tasks that are cognitively engaging.

#### Supporting Evidence

- The school has implemented a lesson plan rubric that teachers use to ensure coherence in instructional planning. In addition, a common lesson planning template utilized by the majority of teachers ensures coherence in planning across all grades and subject areas. For example, all planning documents include a learning target, prior learning connection, and active engagement tasks for all students. Additionally, a reading workshop lesson plan included an active engagement section that clearly outlined how students would be actively engaged in the lesson. This same section, with explicit step by step processes, was seen in all lesson plans reviewed. In addition, all planning documents included key academic vocabulary to be used during the lesson. For example, a science lesson plan for constructing a top, included words such as “shaft, whirl,” and “spiral.”

- Several planning documents explicitly shared a variety of ways that teachers use student work and data to plan and refine tasks, for all students to have access to each lesson. For example, many lesson plans contained an enrichment section for higher-level students, including challenge activities and strategies for using those students as teachers to help facilitate small group instruction. A kindergarten literacy lesson illustrated that based on data from recent checks for understanding, certain students would need sentence starters, visuals and possibly the use of shorter breaks. In addition, the lesson plan evidenced tasks for differentiated reading groups and for a small writing group that would need re-teaching. A math lesson plan included clock templates and the use of smaller groups for students who would need additional support, based on the baseline assessment prior to the lesson.

- Math planning documents evidenced strategic instructional shifts, most notably fluency. For example, a first-grade math lesson plan used a “fluency sprint,” where students would have 60 seconds to complete as many problems as they could. Other math planning documents included a fluency practice section that incorporated activities to allow students time to practice math skills that would be part of the upcoming lesson. All science and STEM lesson plans included an investigation component that clearly outlined the steps students would be taking during their project or experiment. Additionally, all planning documents incorporated “I Can” statements, as part of daily learning targets that identify what students would be learning. For example, the learning target for a third-grade writing lesson was, “I can plan 3 reasons, with examples and many possible solutions”. A third-grade science lesson plan’s learning target was, “I can determine rules that will allow me to make predictions about where a rolling cup will land.”
Additional Finding

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Quality Indicator:</th>
<th>2.2 Assessment</th>
<th>Rating:</th>
<th>Well Developed</th>
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**Findings**

Across the vast majority of classes, teachers use and or create rubrics and assessments that are aligned to the curricula and offer a clear portrait of student mastery. The school uses common assessments, including on-demand writing assessments, to create a clear picture of student progress towards goals, track progress, and adjust curricula and instruction.

**Impact**

All teachers provide actionable and meaningful feedback to other staff and students regarding student achievement. All students, including English Language Learners (ELLs) and students with disabilities have demonstrated increased mastery of learning goals.

**Supporting Evidence**

- Students are offered feedback in a variety of ways. Feedback to students captures the student’s strengths and offers clear actionable next steps. Students are often given written feedback directly on the student rubric and other times it is written on a post-it note that is attached to the student’s work product. For example, feedback on a student’s writing piece included a glow that stated, “You really thought about your characters feeling and actions. I can tell by your use of precise and vivid words.” A grow for that student read, “When you revise and edit make sure you read out loud and listen for missing words and word endings”. Feedback on a first-grade student's writing assignment included a glow that praised the student for sharing “all of the different vehicles your family travels in” and a grow that told the student to continue practicing combining some of his sentences. This type of written feedback was offered to students across all grades and subjects.

- There are a variety of common assessments that teachers use to evaluate student learning and adjust curricula and instruction as needed. The school uses a common reading assessment program that allows multiple opportunities for students to increase their reading levels, several times per year. In addition, there is an on-demand writing assessment seven times per year, that allows teachers opportunities to regularly use that data to adjust lessons and curriculum to improve student mastery of learning goals. Based on the data, they guide students in setting writing goals and help them adjust and or create a new goal after each on-demand writing assessment. Data from the on-demand tracking system demonstrated that from the start of the school year up to the date of this review, students reached mastery of skills assessed by an on-demand narrative writing assessment. During the first assessment no student achieved mastery, but by the third assessment, 75 percent of the students in that same class attained mastery. During a meeting with teachers, they explained that they track students’ progress on these and other assessments by regularly reviewing students’ assessment binders and portfolios.

- During the meeting with students, they all shared how helpful feedback from teachers is. One student stated, “Feedback from my teacher helps me because it always tells me how I can fix my work”. Another student stated, “Feedback helps me not make the same mistakes again,” while another student shared that students look at past post it notes and add their teacher’s feedback to their new assignments. One student explained how the school leader also comes into classes and gives them feedback, sharing her thoughts on their assignments and work products that are posted on bulletin boards. In addition, students explained that after an exam or assessment, their teacher sits with them, reviews their results, and offers them verbal as well as written feedback that helps them “get better test scores in the future.”
**Findings**

The school leader consistently communicates to all staff, high expectations connected to elements of the Danielson *Framework for Teaching*, via media that include email communications called “Comings and goings”. All staff communicates and partners with families to share high expectations for students.

**Impact**

The school leader provides all staff with training to meet expectations and all staff members hold themselves mutually accountable for the expectations. Home-school partnerships between staff and families support students’ progress towards all expectations.

**Supporting Evidence**

- Prior to the start of the year, there are two days of professional learning sessions that encompass expectations for the school year. Agendas indicate that these sessions include a focus on responsive classrooms, reflecting one of the school’s belief about how students learn best. In alignment to elements of the Danielson *Framework for Teaching*, the trainings also focus on instructional absolutes and non-negotiables, emphasizing how teachers can work towards and hold themselves accountable for meeting those expectations. Emails from the school leader consistently remind teachers of all expectations and praise them when they demonstrate achievement of any of the expectations. During the meeting with teachers, they shared that they regularly visit each other to strengthen their practice. One teacher explained that checks for understanding was an area of weakness for her, so she visited colleagues who were strong in that area to learn how to use checks for understanding more effectively in her instruction.

- During the meeting with families they all noted that they share a close partnership with staff, were fully aware of their children’s progress and “never surprised” about anything to do with the school. One family member said, “There is nothing that goes on in the school that we are not aware of. Communication is excellent”. Teacher’s send communication folders home to families every night, sharing information and providing reminders of expectations for their children. Many families explained how the first thing that they do every night, is look through the communication folder to see if there are any notes to be answered. Others shared that teachers communicate with them in real-time, using a Remind App to send them pictures, texts, and videos of their children working in the classroom. School and grade-level expectations are introduced during family orientation nights and there are grade-specific workshops that connect families to resources that they can use with their children at home. In addition, many families explained that every day at student drop off and pickup time, they have regular check-ins with their children’s teacher.

- Professional Development (PD) is directly aligned to the needs of all staff and heavily focused on training them to meet the high expectations for learning across the school. During the meeting with teachers, they all shared how PD “is designed to what our kids need, what we need, and what our foci are throughout the year.” For example, since student discourse was identified as a priority schoolwide, math lead teachers attended a PD session on critical discourse in math and this was turnkeyed back to the staff, contributing to mutual accountability for teaching and learning in math. Some teachers added that with fluency in math being a strategic focus this school year, they created professional learning opportunities that looked closely at math fluency and added elements, including minute quizzes, to third grade units. Other teachers shared that they were recently sent to a PD session for training on Teachers College Reading and Writing Project (TCRWP) curricula, which is the foundation of reading and writing instruction in the school.
Findings

The vast majority of teachers engage in inquiry-based, structured collaborations, using the Data Analysis Protocol to systematically analyze classroom practice, student work, and assessment data. Distributed leadership structures are embedded throughout the school.

Impact

Teacher team collaborations have strengthened teacher instructional capacity and promoted implementation of the Common Core, resulting in instructional coherence and increased achievement for all learners. Teachers play an integral role in all decision making throughout the school.

Supporting Evidence

- During the school visit, the kindergarten team reviewed student reading data to adjust and or create new reading teams. Teachers used data from primary sources such as running records, unit assessments, on-demand writing tasks, and samples of students’ independent work, to inform their planning. They discussed challenges and brainstormed solutions, to gain consensus on the best action steps for students. They also noted how many students made significant growth in reading scores, with many moving up by two or three reading levels. Additionally, they identified students who were below the expected reading level but had made substantial improvement in recognizing letters and letter sounds. The teachers ended the meeting by outlining how students would be grouped, such as by “reteach skills” or “push skills”, when the groups of students would meet, and the tools that they would use to assess the students. Work such as this not only improved teacher practice, but also enhanced mastery of goals for groups of students. Early year kindergarten data reflected 82 percent student mastery of math goals related to counting and numbers, names, and measurement data.

- Through distributed leadership structures, many teachers serve in leadership roles that improve teacher practice and student learning, schoolwide. A team meeting which was observed, highlighted teachers’ voice in decision making and leadership roles such as facilitator, time-keeper, and recorder. In addition, since this is a small school with no assistant principal, the school leader relies heavily on teachers to help run the school. Several teachers are part of the instructional cabinet that meets weekly to discuss curricula, pedagogy, and other aspects of school operations. Those teachers work closely with peers, sharing information discussed at the meetings. Teachers are also part of the PD cabinet, making decisions on PD activities based on teacher’s requests, interests, and observation data. For example, teachers identified math as an area needing additional support and the PD calendar showed PD sessions aligned to that need.

- There are two model teachers who support all teachers with lesson planning and implementing instructional practices, aligning both activities to the school’s instructional focus and promoting instructional coherence, schoolwide. During the meeting with teachers, they shared how valuable it is to have the model teachers support their instructional practices. Additionally, through teacher teams, teachers have incorporated questioning and strategic use of small groups into their practice, to improve instruction and increase student achievement in relation to targeted Common Core skills. Visits to classrooms and reviews of lesson plans showed evidence of these strategies and practices across the school. These strategies and practices have also contributed to a student proficiency score of 53 percent schoolwide, on the New York State English Language Arts (NYSELA) exam in 2018, the school's first year of testing on that assessment, compared to an average of 28 percent proficiency for other elementary schools in the district.