Quality Review Report

2019-2020

P.S. 241 Emma L. Johnston
Elementary 17K241
976 President Street
Brooklyn
NY 11225

Principal: Frantz Lucius

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

Lead Reviewer: Debra Tasioudis
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. 241 Emma L. Johnston 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

### Instructional Core

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>To what extent does the school...</th>
<th>Area</th>
<th>Rating</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1.1 Ensure engaging, rigorous, and coherent curricula in all subjects, accessible for a variety of learners and aligned to State 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 State standards and the 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>Area of Celebration</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

*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>Additional Finding</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>
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</tbody>
</table>

## Systems for Improvement

*To what extent does the school...*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Area</th>
<th>Rating</th>
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<tbody>
<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</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 schoolwide 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>Area of Focus</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 State standards</td>
<td>Additional Finding</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Findings
The school has developed teaching practices from a coherent set of beliefs that students learn best through student-to-student discussion, where students make assertions in problem-solving tasks, and through using text-based evidence.

Impact
Teaching practices purposefully engage learners in student-to-student discussions, writing, and problem solving, which result in high levels of thinking, participation, and ownership.

Supporting Evidence

- Across the vast majority of classes, teaching practices reflect the belief that students learn best through discussions with peers. Teachers use the think-pair-share discussion protocol and accountable talk stems to support students in these discussions, with differentiated texts or tasks. In a third-grade English Language Arts (ELA) lesson focused on summarizing a text by identifying the main idea and supporting details, students worked together in small groups, collaboratively reading text and summarizing it in small chunks. Students were provided with accountable talk stems and questions they could use to focus their discussion. These supports allowed students to take ownership of their work, posing their own questions and refocusing each other on the task at hand. This latter action was observed when a student redirected her group to use a different set of questions to break the story apart. In another group, students took ownership of the discussion by extending it to not only summarize the text but also to discuss how the main character changed over time. The focus on discussion seen in this class was typical of teaching practices in other classes observed throughout the review.

- In a science class, students were given statements about stars, including their brightness and distance from Earth. Students were then tasked with finding supporting evidence for their statements using a variety of resources of their choosing, including books, articles, and web-based resources. Next, students worked together in small groups to set up research plans about stars and then used resources of their choosing to find supporting evidence. In one group, as students found information, they adjusted the given statement to add more details about the distance of several stars from Earth, rather than just talking about which was closest, taking ownership of the task. Here, as in other classes, the teacher served as a facilitator of learning, ensuring that students had the materials, vocabulary resources, and time needed to work together, leading to high levels of student thinking, discussion and participation.

- Two math classes visited featured a lesson created collaboratively by teachers based on a discussion about how to get students to represent their thinking in multiple ways. Students worked together in small groups to solve differentiated partial-quotient problems, displaying their problem-solving skills and mathematical thinking in writing, through discussion, and with manipulatives, pushing one another’s thinking. In a group of boys working together, one read the problem as written on a peer’s paper and asked him to explain his thinking. When the student indicated he did not understand the strategy for breaking the number apart, his classmate picked up the manipulatives and modeled for his peer, who quickly understood. Discussions like this occurred in each group, demonstrating high levels of student thinking and participation, as well as student choice in how to demonstrate their thinking.
Area of Focus

<table>
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<tr>
<th>Quality Indicator:</th>
<th>4.2 Teacher Teams and Leadership Development</th>
<th>Rating:</th>
<th>Proficient</th>
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</table>

Findings

The majority of teachers are engaged in structured, inquiry-based professional collaborations on grade-level teams. Teacher teams consistently analyze assessment data and student work to improve curricula and instructional practices.

Impact

While the work of teacher teams leads to instructional coherence across the grades, it does not yet result in increased achievement for all students. Mastery of goals for groups of students is not yet evident.

Supporting Evidence

- Grade-level teacher teams engage in structured inquiry that focuses on improving instructional and curricular practices, connected to the school goal of improving student progress in reading and math, as well as the implementation of State standards. In their weekly meetings, teachers focus on a review of student work or student assessment data, such as from unit pre- or end-of-unit assessment. Based on this review, teams then make adjustments to lessons and tasks within existing units or use this data to guide lesson planning for new units. In a fourth-grade teacher team meeting observed during the review, teachers reviewed strengths of students across the grade from the most recent end-of-unit writing task, identifying gaps in student understanding of particular skills or State standards. Teachers then used their gap analysis to refine teacher instructional practices and recreate tasks for students performing at different levels. These practices included the addition of new writing models for students and added lessons on sequencing or descriptive language. This process of teacher teams using student work to drive changes to curricula and instruction was well-documented in the team’s binder as well as in the work of other teams shared during the visit. While this work leads to improved teacher practice and coherence of instructional strategies across the grades, there is not yet evidence that the work of teacher teams is leading to increased student achievement for all learners.

- In a question-and-answer session with teachers from teams across the school, teachers stated that their time with their grade level teams serves as a great source of professional learning. Teams allow teachers to share instructional strategies, including ways to provide students with multiple entry points into tasks, such as by including graphic organizers or extension activities for students who need it. One teacher shared that it has really helped her to hear about the challenges that other teachers face in the classroom, and that it has caused her to be more reflective and to ask her peers for assistance when needed. Other teachers agreed, noting that because of professional collaborations, teachers share resources readily and visit each other, leading to strengthened teacher practice across the grade. Moreover, teachers have improved their capacity to meet the needs of students with disabilities and Multi-Language Learners (MLLs), as related-service providers also participate in teacher team meetings, reviewing teacher and student work and providing guidance and support. Teacher observation data support these assertions regarding strengthened teacher instructional capacity, as over 88 percent of teachers received effective or highly effective ratings in the Danielson Framework for Teaching during the 2018-2019 academic year.

- Students are showing progress because of improved teacher practice resulting from professional collaborations. But while teacher teams consistently review student assessment data, using the results to create differentiated tasks for groups of students and to place students in leveled groups for instruction, teams do not yet have a structure in place to measure mastery of goals for groups of students throughout the year. Consequently, the work of teacher teams has not yet resulted in improved mastery for groups of students.
Additional Finding

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

School leaders and faculty make decisions to ensure that curricula are aligned to State standards, with a focus on academic vocabulary and text-based writing and discussions. Curricula and academic tasks consistently emphasize rigorous habits and higher order skills.

Impact

Alignment to the State standards builds coherence across the grades and subject areas and promotes college and career readiness for all students, including MLLs and students with disabilities.

Supporting Evidence

- Lesson plans examined throughout the review align to State standards and demonstrate a commitment to purposeful decisions to focus on speaking and listening, vocabulary development, and writing across the subject areas. In a reading lesson plan shared, there are three State standards included, two focused on reading literature and one on listening skills. The lesson also includes the use of a vocabulary routine to focus on important vocabulary terms in the lesson that are important for students' understanding of culture and traditions, a concept central to the lesson. Similarly, a science lesson plan reviewed aligns with State standards for science content and writing skills, with a focus on the vocabulary term evidence and how students and scientists use it in similar and different ways across the disciplines.

- In a math lesson plan on the distributive property, learning activities are designed to align to State standards for math and writing, including a task for students to reflect on how they use the distributive property to solve problems during the lesson. This creates an opportunity for students to demonstrate their mathematical thinking in writing at the close of the lesson. A lower grade math lesson also included a writing task, asking students to write about how they use models to compare and subtract numbers. The lesson, as with others throughout the review, included attention to Webb's Depth of Knowledge by including a bank of questions connected to the learning objective to support MLLs. These questions varied in complexity, from asking students to say how many parts there are in a bar model to those involving more advanced thinking, such as this planned think-pair-share question: "How can you use the bar model method to help you solve a problem?" Thus, such varied questions, along with planned sentence stems for partnered discussions and differentiated tasks for leveled groups of students, consistently emphasize rigor for all students, including students with disabilities and MLLs.

- In tasks observed during classroom visits and in student-work folders, there is evidence of rigor and persistence by students, emphasized by their demonstrating thinking across texts and using text-based evidence in writing. In an end-of-unit writing task, students were asked to select one theme from Lois Lowry's *Number the Stars* and explain how the theme develops throughout the novel, citing text-based evidence. In a piece of student work reviewed, there was use of paraphrasing and direct quotes as evidence, as well as the student's interpretation of the author's purpose. In a math task shared on writing numerical expressions, students were asked to show the strategy that they used in numerical expressions as well as to explain what they did and why in writing, emphasizing rigor.
### Findings

Across classrooms, teachers' assessment practices consistently reflect the use of rubrics and written feedback to students that align to the curricula. Teachers confer with students during instruction to check for understanding and promote student self-assessment.

### Impact

Teacher grading practices and conferring with students in the classroom provide actionable feedback to both teachers and students and help teachers make effective adjustments to meet student learning needs.

### Supporting Evidence

- Student work reviewed across classes included the use of rubrics and actionable next steps for students aligned with curricula across the subjects. A social studies task shared by a student included a graded rubric and written feedback from the teacher. The teacher praised the use of details in student’s writing and provided two next steps for the student, one to work on the topic sentence and the other to use transitional words when changing topics or moving to the next paragraph. The student stated that these next steps from the teacher helped in improving the student’s work. A science task shared by another student also included a rubric, as well as actionable feedback for improving a model of a molecule. This consistent use of rubrics and written feedback to students was also observed in student-work folders. In ELA classes, the writing rubrics used describe students’ performance on learning expectations in relation to those of the previous and following grade levels, providing students and teachers with a clear portrait of mastery, a practice not yet in place in other subject areas.

- Students noted that in addition to the teachers’ use of rubrics and checklists, teachers regularly talk with them individually about the areas they need to work on next. One student noted, “My teacher gives me comments on what I got wrong and they are helpful. She also shows you how you can use the rubric that is stapled to your work to move up. If you get a two, you can see what you need to add to get a four. If you get a four, you should still try to get better by including everything that is on the rubric.” Another student shared feedback on a writing assignment with a next step to use transitional phrases in their writing. The student also noted that the teacher provided a list of transitional words and phrases for use during revisions. These one-on-one meetings, in addition to written rubric-based feedback, provide actionable feedback to students and teachers regarding student achievement.

- Across classes, teachers use ongoing checks for understanding to ensure students learning needs are met. This includes creating opportunities for students to self- and peer-assess, usually by providing students with a rubric or checklist during instruction and prompting students to review the rubric and their work with a partner, as observed in a writing lesson. Teachers also check for understanding during the lesson. In a science lesson, the teacher conferred with individual students before stopping the class mid-workshop to ensure that students understood the difference between diameter and distance. The teacher also invited a few students to share their thinking, an effective adjustment to meet student learning needs, as several students subsequently stopped to revise their work or explain their work to others at their table. In a math lesson, students worked in partnerships to solve problems, collaborating on paper or on whiteboards. This lesson structure allowed the teacher to circulate throughout the room, reviewing student work and posing questions to adjust student thinking while allowing students to self- and peer-assess as they collaborated on problem solving.
Additional Finding

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<thead>
<tr>
<th>Quality Indicator:</th>
<th>3.4 High Expectations</th>
<th>Rating:</th>
<th>Proficient</th>
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Findings

School leaders regularly communicate expectations to staff, with an emphasis on integrating vocabulary instruction and accountable talk strategies into the classroom. Parents appreciate the ease of communication with teachers and staff about school expectations and their children's progress.

Impact

Teachers are held accountable and are provided with professional learning (PL) supports. Progress reports and ongoing dialogue with teachers and staff help parents understand the progress their children are making.

Supporting Evidence

- School leaders consistently communicate high expectations to teachers and staff through PL, with sessions led by the school leader, teachers, and external coaches. Monday PL session topics include differentiating instruction, culturally responsive pedagogy, and several sessions focusing on improving student use of vocabulary in writing and discussion. PL agendas and notes also articulate clear expectations to teachers connected to the Danielson Framework for Teaching, with a focus on instruction and assessment. In addition, teachers engage in outside professional learning focused on literacy, math, and developing accountable talk routines in the classroom. These sessions provide teachers with support and create a culture of high expectations among staff. School leaders hold teachers accountable for these expectations through the observation process. In several observation reports reviewed, teachers received feedback and next steps connected to their implementation of teaching practices shared at PL sessions, as well as clear feedback from leaders about lesson planning expectations within the school.

- In a meeting with teachers, several shared how PL supports their understanding of expectations and the shifts in literacy instruction. As one teacher shared, “As a lead teacher for ELA, I attended professional learning at the district office to learn about the hallmarks of literacy. When I returned, I identified supporting texts in our curricula that we now send home for students to read and we discuss with their families. We are then extending those discussions in the classroom.” Another teacher shared that the PL she attended this year is already helping her revise her vocabulary instruction, as she now focuses on five critical vocabulary words each week that cut across content areas. There are also expectations that teachers collaborate across the grade on vocabulary instruction. For instance, PL sessions allow teachers from varied disciplines, such as art, ELA, and math, to have time to meet across classes so they can work together to improve the coherence of vocabulary instruction across the school.

- School leaders and staff consistently communicate with caregivers about student progress through frequent phone calls, in-person meetings, and, for some classes, an online communication platform. Parents shared that teachers are very welcoming and take time to speak with them at arrival and dismissal or by appointment. Parents praised the communication of teachers and staff and felt that the school is very family oriented. Parents also appreciate the frequency of more formal communication about student progress, including progress reports and report cards. As one parent shared, “The progress reports help you to catch issues when they are still small.” Other parents noted that they receive reports from an online learning platform that students use for reading and math lessons that detail areas of student growth and areas where students still need to improve. Parents appreciate these as well as curricula workshops offered by the staff and websites that they can use at home to help them better understand the expectations for their children for literacy and math.
## 4.1 Teacher Support and Supervision

### Rating:
Proficient

## Findings

Teachers receive effective feedback from school leaders through collaborative post-observation conferences, which include a focus on student work and data. Written feedback to teachers accurately captures strengths, challenges, and specific next steps.

### Impact

Feedback to teachers articulates clear expectations and focuses on teacher professional growth.

## Supporting Evidence

- A review of the school’s *Advance* data demonstrates frequent cycles of teacher observation conducted by assistant principals, one of whom observes upper grade teachers and the other the lower grade teachers. The principal cycles through all grades and prioritizes observations for teachers needing more intensive support. School leaders and teachers shared that the principal and other administrators dedicate time every day to observe instruction and offer on-the-spot feedback and modeling for teachers, beyond what is captured in formal observations. Teachers shared that the frequency of observations by school leaders, both formal and informal, helps to make observations more meaningful opportunities for reflection because they are so common that it becomes a very collaborative process. For instance, teachers give their input to leaders about where their practices fall within the Danielson *Framework for Teaching*, and leaders and teachers decide together on next steps.

- A review of written teacher observations reveals that the feedback teachers receive is specific, actionable, and time bound. In one observation report, the teacher was praised for using an accountable talk strategy while students engaged with one another in a discussion of problem solving. The next step provided to the teacher was to improve the use of assessment in instruction. The teacher was encouraged to add an exit ticket, such as a math journaling prompt, at the end of the lesson to assess individual student understanding. This feedback, similar to feedback reviewed in other reports, is specific and actionable, with clear connections to the Danielson *Framework for Teaching*. In this report, the administrator also noted that he would be back to observe in three weeks with the expectation of seeing the implementation of next steps, making the feedback time bound. This observation process supports teacher development and promotes opportunities for teachers to demonstrate professional growth and reflection.

- Teachers shared that during the post-observation conferences that accompany formal observations, the conversation is always focused on a review of student work or data and the Danielson *Framework for Teaching*. Teachers appreciate that the administrators take time to talk through their feedback for each component rated and also take time to review the *Framework* itself. This provides teachers with the time to deepen their understanding of its contents and to reflect on their own practice. As one teacher shared, “They are very clear about what your areas of strength are and what you need to work on. It’s really a collaborative process. You review the Danielson *Framework* and you also give your input on where you think you are. The conversation is really focused on your growth.” These reflective, post-observation conversations with leaders, where teachers bring their lesson plans, student work samples, and review the Danielson *Framework for Teaching*, elevate schoolwide instructional practices, as evidenced by increases in teacher ratings in *Advance* data shared.