Quality Review Report

2019-2020

P.S. 129 Patricia Larkin

Elementary 25Q129

128-02 7 Avenue
Queens
NY 11356

Principal: Marilyn Alesi

Dates of Review:
October 24, 2019 - October 25, 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. 129 Patricia Larkin serves students in grade K 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>To what extent does the school...</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 State 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 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 Focus</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>Well Developed</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
### School Quality Ratings continued

#### School Culture

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Area</th>
<th>Rating</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1.4</td>
<td>Maintain a culture of mutual trust and positive attitudes that supports the academic and personal growth of students and adults</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3.4</td>
<td>Establish a culture for learning that communicates high expectations to staff, students, and families, and provide supports to achieve those expectations</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

#### Systems for Improvement

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Area</th>
<th>Rating</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1.3</td>
<td>Make strategic organizational decisions to support the school's instructional goals and meet student learning needs, as evidenced by meaningful student work products</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3.1</td>
<td>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>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4.1</td>
<td>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>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4.2</td>
<td>Engage in structured professional collaborations on teams using an inquiry approach that promotes shared leadership and focuses on improved student learning</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5.1</td>
<td>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>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Area of Celebration

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

Findings

The vast majority of teachers engage in structured collaborations such as grade inquiry teams and cross-grade content teams that systematically analyze key elements of teacher work such as planning rigorous tasks and assessment practices.

Impact

The work of teacher teams result in instructional coherence, shared improvements in instructional practice, increased student achievement for all learners in reading, and increased mastery for groups of students in math.

Supporting Evidence

- Artifacts from a grade four teacher team include teacher reflections on the utilization of formative assessments to identify student reading skills, such as comparing points of view, identifying author’s craft and structure, and analyzing character motivations. Through this work, teachers came to the conclusion that planning for more rigorous student tasks did not necessarily mean assigning more difficult words, and made concrete plans to transition away from over-scaffolding for students, and for students to move away from reliance on graphic organizers towards more student choice of what tools they need and when. Such shared improvements in instructional practice have resulted in all students from kindergarten to fifth grade progressing in their reading levels and improving their work on accuracy, fluency and comprehension as per baseline data collected thus far as compared to student benchmark assessments for the previous school year.

- The work of vertical content teams foster inter-grade collaborations, leading to schoolwide instructional coherence. Teachers in the English Language Arts (ELA) vertical team worked on creating coherent and consistent cross-grade rubrics for the on-demand writing assessment that serves as a schoolwide common assessment, which specifies clear expectations for students from one grade to the next. The rubric, based on the Next Generation Standards in writing, outlines expectations on organization, elaboration and conventions, and is utilized not only within classrooms across grades, but also to identify class, grade and schoolwide trends and patterns as a basis for feedback to individual teachers and grade teams.

- During the teacher team observation, grade three teachers met to conduct inquiry into student work on a recent Productive Struggle, a schoolwide practice and protocol describing both student work and the assessment of that work. On a Productive Struggle math task, teachers utilized student samples from a focus group of students representing those below mastery, approaching or at mastery, and above mastery levels to identify interclass and intergrade trends and patterns. They found student challenges with comprehension of the problem, the accurate or inaccurate use of models, issues with organizing the problem or students missing question elements in their answers. Teachers then identified teaching points, modified the next assessment so that the context of the problem would be familiar to all students, and determined specific scaffolds for groups of students. They collaboratively created goals for the team members to implement, measure and discuss by the following inquiry team meeting whether or not their scaffolds and identified instructional adjustments had a positive impact on student achievement. Such systematic inquiry work result in increased mastery of goals for groups of students, including 41 percent of students schoolwide increasing one to three levels of mastery to date according to the school’s common Productive Struggle rubric.
### Area of Focus

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Quality Indicator:</th>
<th>1.2 Pedagogy</th>
<th>Rating:</th>
<th>Well Developed</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>

#### Findings

Across the vast majority of classrooms, teaching strategies such as scaffolds, tiered work, visual content and language supports, strategically provide multiple entry points and high-quality supports and extensions into the curricula. Student work products and peer-to-peer discussions across the vast majority reflect high levels of student thinking, participation and ownership although evidence of this was missing in a few classrooms.

#### Impact

A variety of learners, including Multi-Lingual Learners (MLLs) and students with disabilities, are engaged in appropriately challenging tasks and demonstrate higher-order thinking skills, participation and ownership in student work products and discussions.

#### Supporting Evidence

- Students in a grade three math lesson explored and applied various multiplication properties to solve math problems involving multiples of eight. Students were heard discussing in pairs or triads their mathematical strategies, such as using the distributive property to break down the number into factors utilizing doubles facts. Students were supported through a variety of scaffolds such as number lines at their desks and table tents with examples of the various multiplication properties. Specific students worked through individualized scaffolds on their common problem that broke down the multi-step problem into stages, so that students could make their thinking visible, and engage in the conversation and peer assessment.

- In a grade five reading lesson, students worked in homogenous book clubs to compare and contrast multiple characters and their traits. Students were observed utilizing notes that gave text evidence that supported their views on a specific character, with peers within the book club evaluating their peers’ text evidence. Students worked in groups on book club texts at their independent reading level including those above grade standards, which allowed those who were reading above, at and below grade level to engage in the book club conversation. Students were supported in holding accountable conversations through discussion sentence starters placed in the middle of the book club groups that focused students in grounding their opinions on text evidence. MLLs were supported with texts in Spanish and translations, as well as an electronic tablet visual word translator. Diverse learners, including students with disabilities, were supported in the academic work and discussion through vocabulary previews and character trait synonyms, as well as graphic organizers to structure their character compare and contrasts.

- Student discussions and work products across the vast majority of classrooms reflect high levels of student thinking and commitment to making thinking visible. For example, in a grade two math lesson, students were observed working collaboratively and discussing strategies in solving multiplication problems. Students in groups discussed their math work, either using the rows and columns to display arrays, using picture models, grouping and regrouping friendly numbers for easy computation. Students in groups were heard asking for clarification of their peer’s thinking, stating, “I am not too sure how you did this. I need you to explain your thinking for me.” Other students were heard holding each other accountable in making thinking visible, stating, “You need to show your work, as I can’t follow your thinking.” However, such evidence of students holding each other accountable for making their thinking visible was seen in the vast majority, but not all of the classes visited during this Quality Review.
Additional Finding

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

Findings
School leaders and faculty ensure that curricula are strategically aligned to State standards, and emphasize rigorous habits and higher-order skills through justification of student thinking based on text evidence and consistent applications of discussion protocols across grades and content areas.

Impact
The school curricula across grades and content areas coherently promotes college and career readiness, and all students must demonstrate their thinking.

Supporting Evidence

- Unit and lesson plans show alignment to content-specific State standards, with teachers and school leaders making strategic adjustments based on student achievement data. ELA curriculum maps for all grades provide evidence for multiple units with a balance between literary and non-fiction texts, along with the consistent integration of the requirement for students to use text-based evidence in support of their arguments, as evidenced in character studies in *Mean Jean* in first grade or texts from Cynthia Rylant in grade four. Across grade levels, unit plans in math ask students to reason concretely and abstractly as they show their thinking in multiple ways and apply their thinking in real-world situations through the schoolwide use of Productive Struggle math exploration protocols. Across all content areas and grades, planned instructional tasks focus attention on students engaging in collaborative discussions one-on-one, as well as in small and whole group settings in order to build discourse throughout the day.

- Higher-order skills are emphasized in curricula and academic tasks and are embedded schoolwide in a coherent fashion, with planned supports for all learners. Plans for a grade two math lesson involved two teachers working in parallel to support students in utilizing a rows and columns strategy for solving multiplication problems as part of students’ problem solving tool-kits. Planned supports for a variety of learners included table references towards previous strategies with visual prompts for MLLs, as well as tiered questions that guided students towards different strategies or extension questions based on students’ previous performance on in-class assessments and teacher conferences. In a grade four reading lesson, plans included challenging students to identify character changes, the causes of that change and the support of their viewpoint based on text evidence. Differentiation of work included plans for pairs and small groups of students working with graphic organizers, sentence starters, visual and language supports, different levels of text, as well as gathering evidence from multiple books to identify character patterns and trends as meaningful extensions.

- Planned tasks within lesson plans and unit plans consistently emphasize rigorous habits through the use of small group and whole class discourse to support student cognitive engagement, foster student ownership, and demonstrate their thinking. Plans for a grade four arts class tasked students to conduct a close-reading examination of *The Two Fridas* by Frida Kahlo, to describe, gather their noticings, and analyze the artist’s use of symbolism in preparation for small group and whole group discourse on their interpretations and justifications. Planning artifacts for an integrated science and social studies lesson for grade five students included students conducting a close read of a fictional archeological artifact, to interpret the various symbols embedded in the stone tablet in preparation for small group debates on their noticings, making connections between previously taught science materials on constellations, and providing justifications for their positions. Such application of discussion protocols, along with planned scaffolds and discussion supports for students with disabilities and MLLs, embedded coherently across grades and content areas allowed all learners to demonstrate their thinking.
Findings
Across the vast majority of classrooms, teachers use common rubrics such as the Productive Struggle math and on-demand writing rubrics to create a clear portrait of student mastery. These assessments are used to track student progress and adjust instructional decisions.

Impact
Assessment results are used to provide meaningful feedback to students, and all students, including students with disabilities and MLLs demonstrate increased mastery.

Supporting Evidence

- School leaders and teachers use common assessments such as the New York State ELA and math tests, the Fountas and Pinnell (F&P) reading levels and curricula-based rubrics to identify trends and patterns regarding student progress and give feedback to teachers regarding student achievement. For example, school leaders and teacher members of the instructional leadership team collect all student work quarterly on both the Productive Struggle math task and the on-demand writing assessment, to provide specific class and individual student feedback through grade team meetings and make instructional changes. This work has informed the schoolwide instructional focus for this academic year, to build discourse throughout the day in order to build student higher-order thinking skills and make thinking visible. Such emphasis toward student discourse was evident in every class visited and in every lesson plan reviewed during this Quality Review.

- Through schoolwide assessment practices, school leaders and faculty create a clear portrait of student mastery that serves to provide actionable and meaningful feedback to students that supports their growth across content areas. Interviewed students described receiving feedback from their teachers through a variety of means, including checklists, rubrics and one-to-one conferences. Students described receiving meaningful and specific feedback that they have been able to use over multiple years. One student described receiving feedback from previous years that they have been able to apply to their personal narrative, in addition to improving on her punctuation, to more thoughtfully utilize transition words so that the reader is able to better create a mental picture of the story that she is trying to tell. Another student was able to remind himself to cite his evidence as part of his work in ELA, which he then used to provide peer feedback on a short-response answer.

- Across the school, teachers utilize common assessments as well as data from in-class assessment practices to adjust curricular and instructional decisions to support a variety of learners. In a grade three class, students worked on tiered tasks to develop good leads for their opinion pieces, with students in three groups based on their performance on their on-demand writing assessment. Grade one students were observed working in small groups as they analyzed the characteristics of characters on various levels of texts, with some partnerships supported with graphic organizers, individualized vocabulary previews, scaffolds with visual prompts, as well as electronic tablets for language translations. Such instructional adjustments, consistently noted in plans and evidenced in classroom observations has resulted in all students, including students with disabilities and MLLs, demonstrating increased mastery as measured by the school’s on-demand writing assessments and the F&P reading levels for the 2018-2019 school year.
Findings
School leaders and teachers consistently communicate instructional high expectations to the entire staff through individual, grade and vertical content teacher team meetings. Teacher teams and staff establish a culture for learning that systematically communicates a unified set of high expectations for all students through the schoolwide grading policy, feedback practices and guidance for next steps.

Impact
Teachers share a culture of mutual accountability for instructional expectations, and students own their educational experience in preparation for the next level through the support of individualized and focused feedback and guidance.

Supporting Evidence

- School leaders articulate high expectations for all staff through discussions at schoolwide professional development (PD) days and faculty conferences, the teacher handbook, as well as individual, grade-specific inquiry and vertical content teacher team meetings. Through these individual and group meetings, school leaders detail expectations related to instruction, planning and professional collaborations. School leaders meet regularly with teachers individually to engage in reviews of professional growth, expectations for high quality teaching and learning and follow-up based on attended PD. To expand capacity in delivering effective instruction, all teachers receive written and verbal feedback on their performance in relation to best practices highlighted by the Danielson Framework for Teaching.

- Through individual and team discussions at grade and common planning meetings, staff members receive PD support aligned to their needs and interests. Teacher teams collaborate through a consistent and online platform used schoolwide to develop curriculum maps, content units and assessments, share student performance data for each benchmark assessment and corresponding action plans for small group instruction and scaffolds to support groups of students’ access to content material. Following teacher team inquiry meetings, teachers identify trends and patterns and hold each other accountable about instructional changes to be consistent within and across grades. Such collaboration, interviewed teachers stated, results in a sense of shared trust, collaboration, and accountability with colleagues and school leaders.

- Staff members communicate expectations and feedback that prepare all students for the next level through a variety of means, including the schoolwide grading policy and consistent use of content-specific rubrics that are aligned across grades. Students are given both guidance for moving to the next level such as middle school information sessions, and advisement and support in elevating their current work towards following grade expectations. Grade five students described how they understood where they were and the concrete steps necessary to be prepared for middle school. Interviewed students across the grades articulated how they receive feedback from teachers and peers such as improving their use of punctuation to make their stories clearer and honing their arguments by greater use of text-based evidence. Students shared how such feedback informs their self-reflection allowing ownership of their learning process and experience as they articulated personal steps that they need to take so that they can be successful now and in preparation for the next grade.
**Additional Finding**

| Quality Indicator | 4.1 Teacher Support and Supervision | Rating: Well Developed |

**Findings**

School leaders and teacher peers support development for all teachers through strategic cycles of observations as part of administrator inquiry, analysis of student work, grade-specific and cross-grade content teacher teams and peer-led classroom intervisitations. School leaders have a strategic and transparent system for managing PD.

**Impact**

Effective feedback and PD elevate school-wide instructional practices, promote professional reflection and lead to improved student work products.

**Supporting Evidence**

- School leaders conduct informal walkthroughs at the start of the school year and observations for all teachers, and engage in cycles of inquiry based on data from Advance observation reports, curriculum alignment, assessment practices and schoolwide systems for improvement. Teacher performance on the observation reports, including articulated feedback and next steps, are used to identify teacher strengths, share best practices and discuss successful strategies in support of peer-lead PD. School leaders then strategically plan for and conduct subsequent observations based on teacher needs to match administrator strengths or instructional expertise. Teacher peers further support their colleagues, including those new to the profession and to the school community, through discussions at grade-specific inquiry team meetings. Intervisitations within teams, lead either by teacher peers or coaches, follow-up on these expectations to build instructional practices schoolwide.

- As part of feedback to teachers on classroom practice, school leaders and teacher members within the instructional leadership team collect and analyze all student work across the grades on the common on-demand math and writing assessment. This work serves not only to identify student achievement trends and patterns, but to provide feedback to individual teachers and grade teams to make instructional adjustments. For example, feedback on a recent analysis of a grade three on-demand writing piece included highlighting “all students attempting to answer the prompt” and “students answering questions in their native language” but also identifying instructional next steps, such as “elaboration of details instead of ‘lists’,” and boosting introduction/topic sentences for clarity.

- School leaders have a strategic plan that directly links teacher observation data, analysis on student work products, and teacher PD. For example, school leaders noted the need to further develop teaching craft on discussion and questioning techniques, as the lowest rated indicator on the Danielson Framework for Teaching. Discussing these trends and patterns, school leaders and teachers within the instructional cabinet developed cycles of professional learning on planning rigorous instruction and developing higher order questioning. Artifacts from the PD sessions included teacher notes and reflections. One teacher’s reflections note analyzing student tasks and their performance, identifying which quadrant assignment questions fell on the Rigor and Relevance Framework, and creating concrete next steps to make modifications to their questions and relevant scaffolds for students towards rigorous tasks. This system of PD led to improved quality of student work products, as evidenced by observations during this Quality Review. Grade three students in this teacher’s classroom were observed solving real-world problems by applying various multiplication properties as strategies to demonstrate their thinking, with students supported through step breakdowns, sentence stems, and graphic organizers.