Quality Review Report

2019-2020

P.S. 159
Elementary 26Q159
205-01 33 Avenue
Queens
NY 11361

Principal: Paul DiDio

Dates of Review:
January 15, 2020 - January 16, 2020

Lead Reviewer: Lisa Wang
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. 159 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>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>To what extent does the school...</td>
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<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>Area of Celebration</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>
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</tbody>
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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

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<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>Well Developed</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>
<td>Well Developed</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4.2 Engage in structured professional collaborations on teams using an inquiry approach that promotes shared leadership and focuses on improved student learning</td>
<td>Additional Finding</td>
<td>Well Developed</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5.1 Evaluate the quality of school-level decisions, making adjustments as needed to increase the coherence of policies and practices across the school, with particular attention to State standards</td>
<td>Additional Finding</td>
<td>Well Developed</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
**Area of Celebration**

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

**Findings**

School leaders and faculty ensure that curricula are strategically aligned to State standards. Rigorous habits and higher-order skills are emphasized in curricula and academic tasks and are embedded in a coherent way across grades and subjects by including a language goal and multiple scaffolds.

**Impact**

Within the curriculum there is coherence across grades and subject areas with an emphasis on vertical alignment that promotes next level readiness for all students. All learners, including Multi-Lingual Learners (MLLs) and students with disabilities, demonstrate their thinking.

**Supporting Evidence**

- Each lesson plan incorporates a standards aligned teaching point reflecting the school’s instructional and social emotional goals reflecting coherence in expectations towards next-level learning. All teachers have adjusted lesson planning and curriculum to incorporate the schoolwide focus on discourse in order to foster coherence in building student-centered tasks that engage students in critical thinking through discussion utilizing academic vocabulary. School faculty have developed progressions charts and rubrics for discourse to establish expectations for next level planning. As a result, each lesson plan incorporates tasks that provide opportunities for students to engage in rich discussion. The fifth grade math teacher provides algebra training for all teachers to establish a vertical alignment of expectations. Strategic planning is reflected in the list of anticipated misconceptions mapped out for multiple scenarios and organized by if-then statements.

- All teachers incorporate scaffolds, differentiated tasks, and student groupings into lesson and unit plans in a coherent way across grades and subjects to support all learners to demonstrate their thinking. In a kindergarten reading lesson plan, the learning objective for MLLs, “students will be able to use their knowledge of beginning consonant sounds to read unfamiliar words,” is aligned to the teaching point to use letter sound knowledge to help read unknown words. In a grade-five writing lesson plan, higher order thinking questions are built into the teacher’s mini-lesson and share out portion of the lesson plan to support MLLs language objectives for entering students. The lesson plan includes the use of organized pre-identified words or phrases on a graphic organizer to connect the student’s opinion with logically ordered reasons and evidence. For expanding students, the plan is to use a graphic organizer to express a clear point of view and opinion linked to reasons and evidence using transition words. A grade-five lesson plan organizes differentiated scaffolds for each activity station focused on decimals. Planned cooperative learning roles such as a math wordsmith who is responsible for writing an explanation for the groups work, and the equation master who is responsible for recording the groups mathematical equations serve as an additional scaffold for a diverse group of learners.

- An interactive online platform is incorporated into the activity portion of the lesson plan as a scaffold for MLLs who are newcomers. The program is designed to read text to students and capture the student’s comprehension responses to questions. The planning of curriculum uses data to strategically group students for this support with the next level language goal of transitioning newcomer MLLs to engage in conversation in a heterogeneously group of students. This strategy incorporated into the planning has resulted in a quicker transition for MLLs as evidenced in the online platform quarterly assessment tracker, has lifted reading levels, and has resulted in an 8 percent increase in schoolwide performance for MLLs.
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 with a focus on questioning and discourse, and are informed by the Danielson Framework for Teaching. Student work products reflect high levels of student thinking and ownership.

Impact

High levels of student thinking, participation, and ownership were evident, however the schoolwide focus on discourse is still in its early stages of implementation to yield impact on anticipated student outcomes.

Supporting Evidence

- Teaching practices reflect a coherent set of beliefs about how students learn best by fostering discourse. Discussions about student discourse was noted at the team and school levels, as evident in teacher team notes focusing on higher order questioning techniques aligned to the Danielson Framework for Teaching, revising unit and lesson plans for targeted small group instruction and exploring protocols for student discussions. In a social studies lesson, the teacher arranged stations for groups of students to rotate through in order to provide a wide range of resources for students as they explored how geography, trade, and agriculture helped the economy and development of three colony regions. The teacher incorporated tiered graphic organizers for a variety of learners to capture and sort information. Electronic tablets were used by MLLs to support comprehension as well as high levels of student thinking and participation as they responded to the teacher’s questions on the factors influencing interdependence among regions. In a reading lesson, students discussed their books within book clubs to grow their ideas by getting to know the characters. Students used the Thinking About Characters rubric, reading progressions chart and book club checklist to guide their work and build their ability to conduct quality discussions.

- In order to prepare students to engage in opinion writing, the teacher conducted a mini-lesson reading two articles with opposing ideas about the nutritional value of chocolate milk. After the mini-lesson, the teacher met with a group of high performing students to introduce two additional articles that were more challenging to determine the arguments for and against chocolate milk. The teacher conducted additional student group meetings to provide targeted supports. Working with MLLs, the teacher introduced videos and a modified graphic organizer to use as an additional support so that students were able to research and collect information for both sides of the issue and achieve the same goal towards building student ownership through establishing and supporting an opinion. In a grade-three lesson on revising literary essays to lift the level of introductions, the teacher utilized student groups and introduced scaffolds such as the Ways Literary Essayists Can Hook Their Readers chart to support student learning at high levels.

- Student work products reflect high levels of student thinking. Students engage in creating their own checklists using mentor pieces promoting ownership. A student checklist for writing a literary essay was created using an exemplar essay. Teachers build-in multiple opportunities (whole class, student groups, and peer-to-peer feedback) for students to engage in discussions throughout the lesson, reflecting the schoolwide instructional goal to increase student ownership through discourse. Multiple charts and checklists were provided for students to facilitate discourse. While the vast majority of student work products and discussions reflect high levels of student thinking, the school faculty continue to evolve their focus on discourse as a leverage point for building student knowledge and increased achievement among MLLs, in addition to supporting the wide range of learners within their community.
Additional Finding

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

All teachers use or create assessments, rubrics, and checklists that are aligned with the school’s curricula and offer a clear portrait of student mastery. Across classrooms, teachers’ assessment practices consistently reflect the use of ongoing checks for understanding and student self-assessment.

**Impact**

Teachers provide actionable and meaningful feedback incorporating glows, grows and next steps regarding student achievement. Teachers make effective adjustments to meet all students’ learning needs using student data to target tasks and mini-lessons for strategically grouped students.

**Supporting Evidence**

- Teachers provide a glow and grow specific to the learning objectives on student work. Teachers also incorporate a next step in feedback to students including a suggestion or example so students know exactly how to lift the level of their work. Feedback on an infographic piece on the Ice Age, read “Terrific work on choosing a topic for your infographic. It is specific in nature and is intended to inform or convince the viewers. Your four subtopics make sense and connect with your topic. Please be sure to check your work to make sure it has no grammatical errors and is well organized.” A student shared how feedback helped improve writing, “The hardest assignment for me was a journal entry on Native Americans. I didn’t know what to write. My teacher told me to make a draft. She graded it and told me what I should include towards my final draft. The feedback included, ‘Make your writing sound more like a journal entry than a summary of facts.’ As we learned more about Native Americans in class, I thought about the feedback and used the information to relate it to my life and their lives.”

- Feedback is anchored in checklists and rubrics aligned to the task’s learning objectives. One student shared, “When publishing writing pieces, the checklist has all the things you need to get a good grade. In a math story problem, we use a checklist for solving it. We also use checklists for pre- and post-assessments.” Another student added, “In my class we use checklists when we write and read to check off things we’ve completed.” Students also engage in peer feedback using checklists and rubrics to focus the glows and grows they provide to other students. Feedback on a peer’s journal entry includes, “I enjoyed how you used vocabulary words and added the story about the corn husk doll. You should put capital letters at the start of a sentence and in names.” Another student wrote, “I like how you had a heading and grouped your ideas into paragraphs. Next time use strong vocabulary words in your paragraphs.”

- Teachers adjust instruction by collecting data through questioning, observing student discussions, and exit slips to provide additional scaffolds or extensions for student groups. Teachers incorporate midpoint adjustments to share observations and strategies with the whole class, so all students can meet the learning objectives. In a grade two math class, the teacher conferred with student groups as they worked on one- and two-step problems. The teacher documented each student’s level of understanding on a data tracker. The teacher paused the class to share “I noticed most of you are using a standard algorithm. Can you think of another strategy as you work in your groups?” The teacher selected student groups to present their work based on their variation in strategies used to expose the class to variety of strategies. Teacher feedback serves as a model and sets an expectation for peer to peer feedback. Students asked their peers, “What would be your step one, why? What would be your step two? Why did you add instead of subtract?”
Additional Finding

Quality Indicator: 3.4 High Expectations

Rating: Well Developed

Findings

School leaders consistently communicate high expectations through a variety of forums and documents and provide training to the entire staff. School leaders and staff effectively communicate expectations for the next level and successfully partner with families.

Impact

School leaders have created a culture of mutual accountability for their high expectations and support student progress toward those expectations.

Supporting Evidence

- Teachers are informed of the school’s high expectations during the professional development (PD) days at the beginning of the school year including schoolwide policies and procedures, classroom expectations, social-emotional learning goals and core values, the instructional focus for the year as evidenced in the faculty handbook and PD calendar. Teachers that attend outside PD workshops turn-key information to peers. For example, a grade-five math teacher conducted the Algebra for All training schoolwide after attending summer training. Expectations are continually revisited through monthly grade leader and vertical team meetings as evidenced in agendas and minutes. A grade leader shared, “It is good to have a voice when there is a schoolwide conversation and the responsibility to take the information about school issues to other team members.”

- The school leaders build a culture of mutual accountability through the vertical team structure. Each grade has four classes on the grade and one person sits on each of the four vertical teams, English, math, English as a New Language (ENL) and special education. The vertical team leaders meet with school leaders to develop the instructional goals and expectations which are messaged through the vertical team meetings and turn-keyed in grade team meetings. Within the grade team, responsibilities are delegated such as curriculum development and a liaison who works with PD partners to align the school’s expectations and the instruction focus. A teacher shared, “Planning time with grade teams is valuable. Teachers bring ideas and share. Vertical teams have been super impactful on brainstorming around scaffolding.” An academic intervention teacher noted, “During common planning periods, we look at student work and then bring resources to share for the next meeting. Common planning periods have been great for planning academic intervention services in math and literacy.”

- The parent coordinator takes a group of parents on an annual visit to a professional learning institution to communicate the school’s high expectations for literacy instruction. During the Celebration of Learning curriculum fair, student work samples are viewed by parents to see measured progress throughout the year across all curriculum areas, and expectations for the next level. Teachers communicate clear expectations for quality work for each task through rubrics and checklists. Students use these as guides to self-assess their work and peer assess the work of others, explaining and justifying their thinking across curriculum areas. Teachers provide feedback to students and families on writing progression charts, reading level reports, rubrics, and corrected homework packets and include website links for homework review so that they can reflect towards the next level. Parents shared that teachers write notes on their child’s take home agendas along with enrichment or intervention activities depending on their student’s needs so they can support their children. School leaders organize the kindergarten orientation on this day so incoming families can see examples of the school’s expectations as evidenced in student work products. Guidance works with fifth grade families in preparation for the middle school process. Students who have graduated have a ninety-nine percent pass rate in middle school.
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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Findings

Feedback to teachers accurately captures strengths, challenges, and next steps. School leaders have an effective system using teacher observation data to effectively design and facilitate PD. Distributed teacher leadership is established through the teacher-led instructional, vertical and grade team structures.

Impact

Observation feedback articulates clear expectations on incorporating questioning and student discourse in teacher practice, supports teacher development, and aligns with professional goals for teachers. Lead teachers make key decisions towards curriculum alignment, modification, and assessment, impacting student learning.

Supporting Evidence

- School leaders conduct cycles of formal and informal teacher observations focusing on the school’s instruction goals for discourse, to track evidence of growth throughout the year. The instructional leadership team (ILT) conducts schoolwide walkthroughs and use both their observation data and feedback from PD partners to identify patterns and trends in instructional practice within each grade and subject. The ILT completes a school self-evaluation inventory to measure the degree of implementation of identified best practices and their alignment to the instructional goals. The ILT uses this data to design PD experiences that are aligned to the identified areas for growth and includes input from teachers. These ongoing cycles of reflection and supports for professional growth have resulted in the vertical and horizontal alignment of curricula, assessment, and instruction to support all learners.

- Observation report feedback is aligned to the schoolwide instructional goal to build teacher and student discourse across content areas to foster student ownership and support MLL English language acquisition. School leader feedback notes, “Create a learning environment for students in which use of questioning and discussion techniques challenge students to examine their premises, to build a logical argument, and to critique the arguments of others,” is directly linked to the teacher’s specific professional goal, “to encourage students to build logical arguments and critique the arguments of others.” After the post-observation conference, teachers generate their own additional next step for professional growth to work on before the next observation cycle. A teacher discussed her next step goal, “In my observation feedback, the school leader said I need to work on my questioning, I am thinking about how I can lift my level of questioning,” which aligns to the school’s instructional leadership team focus on one of the Hallmarks of Advanced Literacies, to talk and discuss to build language and knowledge.

- School leaders’ feedback reinforces the schoolwide expectations by identifying areas of celebration, for example, “Book clubs are such an amazing time to see all of the discourse work. The evidence of your hard work was in how students transferred the work done in read-aloud to their own student-led discussions. The school’s professional partners work closely with the school’s instructional leadership team to build capacity among the teaching team through targeted PD. Teachers participate in lab-sites across the building to practice and refine their teaching of literacy. To foster succession, lead teachers are identified to take on roles within the school’s support network to assist teachers who have transitioned to different roles within the school or are new to school. The ongoing professional support has positively impacted students’ academic performance as evidenced in student work products and discussions.”
Additional Finding

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

Findings

All teachers are engaged in inquiry-based, structured professional collaborations. Distributed leadership structures are embedded within the school’s multi-tiered teacher teams.

Impact

Through the multi-tiered, teacher-led team structure, teachers play an integral role in key decisions that build teacher instructional capacity through the vertically aligned content specific supports, resulting in schoolwide instructional coherence and increased student achievement for all learners.

Supporting Evidence

- Teacher teams focus on increasing student achievement for all learners by providing additional planning time for dually certified teachers of MLLs and students with disabilities with grade teams to collaborate on how to incorporate scaffolds allowing all students to access curriculum. As a result, schoolwide state exam scores for MLLs have risen over the years, with an 8 percent increase in student achievement from 2018 to 2019. Data on students with disabilities has shown increase in reading levels, writing skills and math problem solving ability from the beginning of this school year to the present as evidenced in teacher data trackers. Equity and diversity team members focus on beliefs and practices aligned with the school’s pillars, democracy, equity, and social justice. In addition, teachers belong to district level teams. The kindergarten summit team members focus on early childhood learning practices from pre-kindergarten to kindergarten.

- Teacher instructional capacity has been strengthened as a result of teacher teams. In observation of the MLL vertical teacher team, which was conducted by the ENL coordinator, teachers across grades looked at student writing samples to see how much progress students are making towards the writing stands using the writing progressions and rubric as a guide. The expectation was that each grade team leader within the vertical team would turn-key this process with their grade teams using grade level student writing samples. In the meeting, teachers identified what students know and did not know based on their strategies they implemented within their writing. Teachers then focused on what the students did not know and tiered student groupings and tasks specific to students’ writing proficiency level. For example, the vertical team leader asked teachers, “What does this transitioning native Spanish speaking student need to know right now to lift the level of writing? How can we give feedback that child can take to other types of writing?” Collective responses included, “Grammar tenses since this focus will help with writing in other subject areas,” and “Elaboration, to clear and have people understand what you are saying, and to make sentences more advanced.” The vertical team leader pointed out, “Please note that these are the conversations you should be having with you grade team when you implement this protocol”.

- Distributed teacher leadership is reflected in the teacher-led instructional leadership, vertical and grade level teams. The instructional leadership team forum, comprised of the vertical leaders, establishes the schoolwide instructional goals for discourse and implications for teaching and learning. Four teacher-led, vertical teacher teams in the areas of ELA, math, students with disabilities and MLLs have representatives from every grade level team, pre-kindergarten to five. The vertical team representatives serve as the grade level team leaders, which allows them to directly turn-key instructional initiatives that are communicated in vertical teams as well as facilitate common planning. In addition, two academic intervention support teachers for both literacy and mathematics meet with each grade level team weekly to guide the work in tailoring planning for small instructional groups providing intervention to meet the academic needs of the students performing below grade level, while keeping to the topics being studied in class.