Quality Review Report

2019-2020

P.S. 161 Arthur Ashe School
Elementary 28Q161
101-33 124 Street
Queens
NY 11419

Principal: Jill Hoder

Dates of Review:
January 23, 2020 - January 24, 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. 161 Arthur Ashe School serves students in grade PK through grade 5. You will find information about this school, including enrollment, attendance, student demographics, and data regarding academic performance, at http://schools.nyc.gov/Accountability/tools/report/default.htm.

School Quality Ratings

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Instructional Core</th>
<th>Area</th>
<th>Rating</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>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>Proficient</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2.2 Align assessments to curricula, use on-going assessment and grading practices, and analyze information on student learning outcomes to adjust instructional decisions at the team and classroom levels</td>
<td>Additional Finding</td>
<td>Well Developed</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
# School Quality Ratings continued

## School Culture

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

## Systems for Improvement

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>To what extent does the school...</th>
<th>Area</th>
<th>Rating</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1.3 Make strategic organizational decisions to support the school’s instructional goals and meet student learning needs, as evidenced by meaningful student work products</td>
<td>Additional Finding</td>
<td>Well Developed</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3.1 Establish a coherent vision of school improvement that is reflected in a short list of focused, data-based goals that are tracked for progress and are understood and supported by the entire school community</td>
<td>Additional Finding</td>
<td>Proficient</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4.1 Observe teachers using the Danielson Framework for Teaching along with the analysis of learning outcomes to elevate schoolwide instructional practices and implement strategies that promote professional growth and reflection</td>
<td>Area of Celebration</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

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

#### Findings

Feedback to teachers accurately captures strengths, challenges, and next steps using the Danielson *Framework for Teaching* and instructional focus on critical thinking. School leaders have a strategic, transparent system for managing professional development (PD) and make informed decisions.

#### Impact

Feedback articulates clear expectations for teacher practice, supports teacher development, and aligns with teachers’ professional goals focusing on building critical thinking. PD and teacher support is strategic in building capacity towards meeting the instructional goals.

#### Supporting Evidence

- The school leader uses feedback to capture teachers’ strengths using the Danielson *Framework for Teaching* in order to reinforce strong pedagogical strategies aligned to both the Danielson rubric and the instructional focus. For example, feedback is provided in alignment to 3C: Engaging students in learning, “[Students] completed a graphic organizer requiring them to identify what happened in the story, how they felt about the event, and how the characters felt. This technique results in active intellectual engagement.” The school leader uses feedback to help teachers focus on the intended student impact of pedagogical strategies focused on critical thinking, “When you asked a question of the class and you expect them to build on each other's thinking, they needed you to facilitate their interaction by repeating and navigating the conversation; students having difficulty with vocabulary.”

- School leaders provide specific, actionable next steps aligned to teachers’ professional goals and the instructional focus on critical thinking. The school leader suggests, “Consider providing more opportunities for student-to-student conversation to increase engagement and ownership. I would like to see that your students are owning their own learning.” Additional next steps provided include focusing on structures supporting a range of learners in the classroom, “Please continue working on your goal which is to support at or above grade-level students in developing critical thinking skills and nurturing their ability to analyze information,” and “To support a writing strategy in working with a small group, please have an example for them to refer to, to anchor the work and offer them a scaffold so they are able to use the strategy independent of you.”

- School leaders have a transparent system for managing PD. In acknowledging the consistent implementation of strong practices, the school leader encourages the teacher to share these practices with colleagues as an actionable next step towards building coherence of critical thinking practices across classrooms, “Please continue to support the school’s instructional focus by engaging students in tasks that require them to think critically and having students monitor their own progress. Scheduled intervisitations for teachers to come see you in action.” The instructional leadership team in collaboration with school leaders take part in instructional walkthroughs to identify best practices to leverage and identify areas of need. Their findings inform the schoolwide PD plan, their work with professional learning partners, the expansion of intervisitation practices, and teacher assignments with the goal of improving student's capacity for critical thinking. For example, school leaders have an established succession plan through the selection of grade leaders based on their familiarity with the standards, observed best practices in instruction, and demonstrated leadership qualities in organizing and turn keying information among colleagues. This structure has built instructional capacity among teachers and resulted in the improved quality of student work as evidenced in samples of written student feedback, self-reflection, and revisions.
Findings

Across classrooms, teaching practices are aligned to the curricula and reflect an articulated set of beliefs about how students learn best that is informed by the Danielson Framework for Teaching and State standards. Across classrooms students were engaged in small group discussions.

Impact

Across classrooms, student work products and discussions reflect high levels of student thinking and participation as aligned with the schoolwide focus on critical thinking, however not within the vast majority of classrooms to indicate that these practices are fully cohesive schoolwide.

Supporting Evidence

- Across classrooms, teachers follow a workshop model structure providing students with direct instruction, time for students to practice and teachers to confer, and time to summarize and wrap up the lesson. Students worked in groups and engaged in conversation during the class activity. In a classroom observation where students were organized in book clubs, deeper discussions about the books were dependent upon teacher facilitation. While there was a range of talk protocols in place, the observed conversations of several student groups working independently had not lifted beyond a basic retell of the story without the teacher’s presence and active intervention. Similarly, within a grade-three literacy classroom, students were engaged in a book conversation and many independent student groups were not able to elevate their conversation beyond a simple retell of the story when comparing the characters across the books they had read.

- Based on the classroom visits, the level of teacher and student posed questions across lessons observed and evidence in number of students engaged in conversations that reflected critical thinking varied across lessons observed. In a social studies lesson focusing on the Bill of Rights, many questions asked were rooted in protocol, rather than encouraging deeper thinking about the content. Questions posed included, “Which amendment did you choose? Do you have an idea in mind for which scenario you want to do? Who is doing what role?” In a writing lesson observed on “How can I advocate for something I am passionate about,” students prepared for a flash debate on the nutritional value of chocolate milk. The teacher focuses on the talk protocol rather than sitting with students to engage them in a deeper conversation to build students’ thinking about their claim versus the counterclaim, and the use of research-based evidence to support and strengthen their argument.

- Instructional practices to facilitate critical thinking and/or evidence of students engaged in critical thinking was not seen across the vast majority of classrooms visited. While general resources such as graphic organizers or note catchers, sentence starters or conversation protocols, checklists or success criteria were made available in many classrooms, not all students incorporated the resources to deepen their thinking while completing their student work or engaging in conversations. As a result, there were varied levels of rigor reflected in student conversations across student groups and across classrooms. For example, in a grade-one math lesson focused on solving addition and subtraction word problems, the teacher circulated through groups reminding students to use the talk prompts to discuss their math problems. This detracted from teacher facilitation time towards engaging students in deeper conversations with student groups about the content and solution pathways.
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 in all subjects and grade levels, is accessible for a variety of learners according to data and are strategically aligned to State standards.

Impact

As a result of strategic decisions made at the grade level with the support of the instructional leadership team, curriculum documents show coherence across grades and subject areas focused on promoting cognitive engagement for all students.

Supporting Evidence

- To ensure standards alignment, lesson plans are organized according to topic, unit questions, learning objective and alignment to standards. In review of a science lesson plan, within a unit on patterns of the earth and sky, the investigation question identified was “What causes the pattern of when we see a particular constellation?” The Next Generation science standards alignment for “Developing and using model practice…” and “Represent change in graphical displays…” was documented. In a reading lesson plan, the essential question was noted, “How can I become an advocate for something I am passionate about?” in addition to the learning objective, “I can use my research to create quick flash debates.” The lesson plan indicated the alignment to the State reading standards, “Locate and refer to relevant details, determine central ideas, compare and contrast, interpret words, phrases, explain how claims are supported.” In addition, the teacher documented the language objective, “Prepare for a range of conversations, integrate and evaluate info presented, identify and evaluate evidence” with a goal of promoting cognitive engagement among all students.

- Teachers’ planning reflect different levels of the use of data to group students to complete the same task using scaffolds as aids in task completion to teachers using data to strategically group students in order to cognitively engage a diversity of students. In a grade four reading lesson plan, the teacher noted the homogeneously, tiered book club groups using data from running records and matched student groups with a book on their reading level. In a lesson reviewed, plans were noted for students to take on assigned cooperative learning roles within heterogeneously organized groups with the intention of providing peer support. In review of the notes of a teacher working with English Language Leaners (ELLs), tasks are designed based on student work and performance data from the prior lesson. The teacher notes follow-up tasks ranging from, “Teach sentence frames, simple and compound” to using supporting evidence from the texts to complete the sentence “The drawback with wind turbines is that…”

- To ensure that individual and groups of students have access to the curricula and tasks multiple entry points are planned for in the form of generalized scaffolds, such as the think-jot-pair graphic organizer, visuals and manipulatives. Some teachers planned tiered tasks based on students’ performance levels on literacy and math assessments: high, medium, or low. Teachers noted specific supports to serve as access points to the lesson for ELLs and students with disabilities. For example, in a math lesson plan, the teacher created multiple entry points for students to discover how models can be used to show additions of fractions as joining parts of the same whole. A task was created for some student groups to work without numbers, to focus on comprehending the problem and appropriate strategy, while other tasks included a range of using numbers and justifying answers with or without the support of visuals and manipulatives with the intent of fostering learning at the next level.
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 classrooms, teachers use assessments, rubrics, and grading policies that are aligned with the school’s curricula and offer a clear portrait of student mastery. The use of common assessments supports the adjustment of curricular and instructional decisions.

Impact

Teachers use rubrics and checklists in conjunction with written feedback to provide specific, actionable, and meaningful feedback to students so that all students can demonstrate increased mastery. Students also engage in peer feedback to provide their peers feedback and next steps on their work.

Supporting Evidence

- Teachers use curricula-aligned rubrics to provide actionable feedback to students. In review of feedback on student work samples a teacher noted, “You developed your thesis with evidence and personal stories which added volume and interest. Let’s work on correcting minor spelling errors and editing next time.” Teachers include next steps in their feedback, “Next time add dialogue, section off your paragraphs try using a graphic organizer.” Students engage in peer feedback activities. Peer feedback on an opinion writing piece included, “Something that (student) did well is that their supporting reasons were very convincing. (Student) can improve their writing by using the devil’s advocate more and fixing their grammar.” During the student interview, students unanimously shared that written feedback from their teachers is helpful and the next steps provided can be applied in other projects. A student discussed the feedback given on a research paper and presentation on the Westward Expansion, “The feedback my teacher gave me was to include definitions for specific vocabulary words, especially if reader is new to the topic. Next time in my research project, I will include a glossary for readers.”

- Teachers utilize conference notes to collect student data and adjust student groups and tasks. For example, in a reading lesson with a focus on drawing meaning and understanding from a given text, the teacher assessed students’ conversation moves and documented student progress. In a review of teacher conference notes an example includes a teacher team’s conference notes to acknowledge whether each student has met the identified standards for reading, writing, speaking, listening and participation when reading the mentor text, *The Sweetest Fig*. Teachers regularly engage in completing a “Reflections on Student Reading Levels” where teachers reflect on student reading level data from running records and Lexile scores to determine why students did or did not move up a reading level and create an action plan for groups of students at each reading level, such as introducing strategies to holding on to the text, inferencing, envisioning and comprehension.

- Teachers maintain data trackers for students receiving targeted reading intervention to assess progress and adjust curricular and instructional decisions resulting in an increase in reading level data. Teachers use common assessments such as running records and quarterly benchmark exams data to group students and adjust tasks. In a reading lesson, a teacher uses reading level data to organize student groups, matching them with appropriate texts and tasks. The universal literacy coach guides the analysis of class data sets for the lower grades of letter sound assessments across the first two quarters of the year school to strengthen instructional as evidenced in meeting minutes and data trackers. In a teacher team observation, the vertical math team analyzes student work to identify the impact of scaffolds used to determine the next steps based on identified student needs. A comparison of math assessment data across grades over the first two quarters reveals an average of 75 percent mastery of topics covered.
### Additional Finding

| Quality Indicator: | 3.4 High Expectations | Rating: | Well Developed |

**Findings**

School leaders use the PD calendar to communicate high expectations and provide training aligned to schoolwide instructional goals. School faculty hold parent engagement activities to partner with families and communicate expectations for the next level.

**Impact**

A culture of mutual accountability has been established through schoolwide structures and systems for teacher collaboration and professional learning. School faculty partnerships with families through parent workshops and Family Fridays support student progress toward high expectations.

**Supporting Evidence**

- School leaders consistently communicate high expectations utilizing the teacher handbook, the established schoolwide grading policy and the PD calendar. School leaders have established internal structures and key faculty members to consistently message these expectations. The instructional leadership team, in partnership with school leaders, work with teachers in establishing personal professional goals for the school year and provide ongoing feedback to keep the school's high expectations at the forefront of the conversation. The PD calendar aligns to and reinforces the high expectations by using learning experiences to engage teachers in reflective practices and action planning to support student progress towards the next level.

- Vertical team members are responsible for both acting as a liaison for their grade within the vertical meetings, as well as accountable for turn-keying information disseminated through the vertical meetings to all members of their grade. The practice of using intervisitations to share best practices and support teacher’s professional learning among their peers fosters mutual accountability for building capacity amongst faculty. One teacher shared, “The principal will give teachers coverage from their teaching schedule to come visit my classroom. Intervisitations are encouraged.” Another teacher shared, “If a lesson isn’t going right we can ask anyone for help. I just participated in an intervisititation to observe a colleague’s strategy for teaching division because my kids weren’t getting it.”

- In addition to the use of multiple online platforms to maintain communication with families, school leaders have built multiple opportunities that facilitate a partnership with families with a goal of communicating high expectations across grades and content areas. During an interview with parents, one parent spoke of the weekly parent engagement time, “Tuesday you have opportunity to meet with your child’s teachers to find out how they are doing so you can take action before the grades come out. I met with my child’s teacher and then the teacher sent a follow-up letter giving me an overview of what my daughter is doing well.” Parent workshops and Family Fridays allow families an opportunity to engage in learning experiences alongside their children. In observation of a Family Friday event focused on math, families visited their child's classroom engaged in math games focused on building math fluency. Parents shared that quarterly assessment reports providing math assessment and reading level data informs them where their children are and where their children should be in terms of performance levels. The annual school survey shows that 98 percent of families say that they get opportunities to visit their child's classroom, such as observing instruction or participating in an activity with their child.
Additional Finding

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

Findings
Teachers are engaged in inquiry-based, structured vertical and grade level teacher teams. Distributed leadership structures are embedded within the school.

Impact
Professional collaborations have strengthened teacher instructional capacity. The instructional leadership team, in conjunction with vertical and grade team leaders play an integral role in key decisions to support schoolwide instructional coherence and increased student achievement for all learners.

Supporting Evidence

- The instructional leadership team is comprised of the six vertical team leaders and the school leaders. All teachers are members of at least one of the established vertical team which include English Language Arts, math, supportive environment, data, equity, and ELLs/students with special needs. Vertical teams align their work to the schoolwide goals on critical thinking, building teacher capacity, creating a coherent common language around the Next Generation Learning Standards with a focus on identifying curriculum gaps and identifying the challenges that come up when implementing it. Vertical team liaisons focus on making the goals more attainable for their grade teams by turn-keying strategies developed to provide teachers with the resources that are helpful for them in the classroom and evaluate the effectiveness of instruction grade-wide. Team agendas, and meeting minutes for each three-week inquiry cycle capture data gathered on student achievement, learnings, wonderings for reflection, and next steps in building instructional coherence.

- Teacher teams meet to strengthen teachers’ instructional capacity. Teachers use the “Standards in Practice” protocol to document their review of work samples for students receiving academic intervention in math and to record the action plans to adjust instructional strategies to support progress towards student goals moving forward. In an observation of the math vertical team meeting, teachers assessed student work samples for math fluency, and documented students’ strategy choice when problem solving. Grade-five teachers noted that five out of six students were able to correctly problem solve using number sentences and they were ready to move on to word problems. In addition, it was noted that four out of six students did really well as a result of receiving instructional support focusing on using place value in decimals. Teachers developed next steps specific to students’ needs within each intervention group across the grades which included the revision of graphic organizers, color coding key language within the word problem, and incorporating manipulatives. Overall, the inquiry work has resulted in student achievement in literacy and math benchmark data as evidenced in quarterly grade-level data trackers.

- Distributive leadership is reflected in teacher participation in teams, where they serve in multiple roles to make decisions about curriculum, teaching, and learning. As evidenced in the PD plan and agendas, each grade comes together weekly to engage in professional learning based on a needs assessment, and teachers’ self-identified areas of interest. Several times a year, grade team meetings are led by teachers to connect the vertical team work to grade level PD. These teacher-led sessions are used to turn-key information, from vertical team meetings, as well as from outside conferences teachers have attended. Teachers are given surveys and choose which vertical team they want to participate in based on interest and passion towards a particular professional and instructional goal. For example, the Equity team leader requested to lead the team and participate in a three-day institute to help in guiding the work in building schoolwide initiatives around school culture and diversity.