Quality Review Report

2019-2020

P.S. 273
Elementary 27Q273
88-07 102nd Street
Queens
NY 11418

Principal: Brenda Ward

Dates of Review:
October 23, 2019 - October 24, 2019

Lead Reviewer: Adam Breier
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. 273 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><strong>To what extent does the school...</strong></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>Developing</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>Additional Finding</td>
<td>Developing</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>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
## School Quality Ratings continued

### School Culture

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Area</th>
<th>Rating</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>To what extent does the school...</strong></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<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>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

### Systems for Improvement

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

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

Findings
The majority of teachers are engaged in structured, inquiry-based professional collaborations that promote achievement of school goals and implementation of State standards. Distributed leadership structures are in place.

Impact
Teachers’ collaborations within grade-based teams strengthen their instructional capacity. Teachers have a voice in key decisions, such as the design and delivery of professional development (PD), and adjustment of academic intervention period programming.

Supporting Evidence

- The grade-five team met to analyze five students’ written responses to a prompt that required them to compare and contrast two or more characters from a text, using specific details from the text to support their arguments. Teachers found that students had difficulty in using textual evidence to support their inferences as to how one character feels about another in a short passage and discussed possible strategies they would explore in their classrooms. The team rotates between looking at English Language Arts (ELA) and math student work on an alternate-week schedule. Teachers also spent time planning for instruction regarding a leveled written piece that addressed the settlement of pre-Columbian North America. The meeting closed with a plan to follow-up with a math task for the next meeting and for a writing assignment in two weeks and that in the meantime, teachers would employ the potential strategies discussed during this meeting.

- Agendas show that across grade-based teams, teachers are looking at data and student work samples and making decisions about lesson planning and teaching strategies. For example, the grade-three teacher team met to review data from a math quiz and generate ideas about teaching strategies that would prompt student discussions during math lessons. Similarly, the grade-four team reviewed data from a math quiz and identified students’ strengths in rounding and adding using place value. Students’ areas for growth included checking work with an alternative strategy and correctly lining-up numbers. Agendas from teacher teams across all grades show that these practices are common.

- Teachers have a voice in making key decisions that affect learning at the school. For example, teachers serve on a committee, comprised of representatives from various grade-bands and content specialties, such as English as a New Language (ENL), which redesigned the implementation of the schoolwide academic intervention period. Students now remain within their grade, but are assigned to homogenous groups based on data to facilitate grouping with students from a different class. This team also surveys staff and conducts classroom walkthroughs to assess teachers’ PD needs. The resulting data is used to design and deliver cycles of PD with subsequent follow-up assessment that informs the design of the next PD cycle. Teacher voice was also included in decisions regarding the membership in and leadership of teams, including the Social Emotional Learning (SEL) committee, which designs all activities that take place during the weekly SEL periods.
## Area of Focus

### Quality Indicator: 4.1 Teacher Support and Supervision

**Rating:** Developing

## Findings

The feedback offered to teachers is not consistently effective, timebound, or specific. Feedback to teachers inconsistently captures strengths, challenges, and next steps, and is not fully connected to the Danielson Framework for Teaching.

### Impact

While feedback included in observation reports is beginning to support teacher development, it does not consistently offer actionable next steps that teachers can take in order to improve their instructional practices.

## Supporting Evidence

- One observation report praised a teacher for implementing the recommendations made during the previous classroom observation. Another observation report included the statement, “It is evident that you have implemented recommendations since your last observation around [using questioning and discussion techniques].” Many observation reports included a statement similar to the following quote from one example: “I will be visiting your classroom the week of March 4, 2018 to observe your implementation of the recommendations noted above.” However, a review of the subsequent observation reports for the same teachers revealed no evidence that the predicted follow-up observation occurs. Additionally, there are multiple observation reports with no reference to teachers’ progress on implementing the recommendations made in prior observation reports, or any mention of a follow-up observation to check-in on teachers’ progress.

- Classroom observation feedback is developing so that it can support teacher growth. For example, in one observation report, the teacher was advised to have students select roles in order to make group work more productive and to use a protocol to guide students’ discussions. In another report, the teacher was advised to use a specific online tool that would assist Multi-Lingual Learners (MLLs) in reading. Other examples of feedback included advice on classroom management and lesson planning strategies. While there were examples of observation reports that included actionable feedback to teachers, there were also reports that included feedback that lacked specificity. For example, one observation report detailed how the teacher did not effectively adjust the lesson, which resulted in a lack of rigor. However, the feedback provided to this teacher did not address this highlighted deficiency. Instead, the teacher was advised to make sure students are aware of the “…instructional tools and resources that are mandated within [Individualized Education Programs] (IEPs)*, and that students know how to use them. Another report detailed how the teacher missed an opportunity to cognitively engage students along with feedback on having a lesson plan readily available during instruction.

- One teacher received identical feedback in two observation reports. The first observation took place in December, 2018. The resulting report detailed how the teacher facilitated a three-minute long break for students during which they danced. Feedback to this teacher advised that such a break last for no more than thirty seconds. However, in the next observation, which took place in January, 2019, the teacher facilitated another three-minute dance break for students. Feedback to the teacher reiterated that dance breaks should not take three minutes. This second report included a statement indicating that there would be a follow-up observation during the week of March 4, 2019. However, there was no evidence presented that this follow-up observation ever occurred.
**Additional Finding**

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

**Findings**

Rigorous habits and higher-order skills are inconsistently emphasized across curricula. Additionally, planning is beginning to reflect that tasks are refined using student work and data.

**Impact**

Curricular documents evidence an inconsistent focus on rigorous instruction for students of all levels, including MLLs and students with disabilities. Lesson plans do not always ensure that the diverse learners at the school have equal opportunities to engage in lessons.

**Supporting Evidence**

- Rigorous habits and higher-order skills are inconsistently emphasized across classes. In a grade-five math lesson plan, students are required to critique peers’ reasoning by asking each other questions, highlighting flaws, and challenging each other to use prior knowledge in the estimation of products. Another lesson plan shows that grade-three students are guided in comparing the strategies they employ in answering algebraic problems with those of their peers. However, there are multiple lesson plans that do not require students to engage in higher-order skills. For example, in a grade-four reading lesson plan, students are asked to identify characters’ traits and support their arguments with textual evidence. Students are not asked to explain the theme, predict characters’ responses, or describe how point of view or word choice can be used to predict next steps in the story or impact a readers’ understanding of the central theme. Similarly, a grade-three reading lesson plan has students identify how characters solved a problem in the novel, *The Case of the Gasping Garbage*. Students are also asked to focus on the dialogue between two characters in order to note how dialogue is used to develop characters. However, students are not asked to describe how character development might impact a reader’s interpretation, result in multiple analyses, or allow for a deepened understanding of author’s purpose.

- Curricular and academic tasks reflect uneven planning to provide students with equal access to the curricula and tasks and cognitively engage diverse learners. A grade-three math lesson plan has students grouped into color-coded data-based groups, identified as either support, on-level, or enrichment. The lesson plan includes differentiated work and targeted, scaffolded tools to ensure equal access. A grade-four math lesson plan shows that differentiated activities have been designed for each leveled group, to be employed if the students in those groups have difficulty in reaching the lesson’s objective.

- There are also lesson plans that illustrate efforts toward planning differentiated instruction, but do not ensure that learners with diverse needs would be able to access instruction. For example, a grade-five reading lesson plan indicates that students would be assigned to one of three groups based on their reading levels. There are no scaffolds in place to ensure student engagement with the same level of work. Instead, students in the highest achieving group are assigned to a task aligned with the highest level four, of Webb’s *Depth of Knowledge* (DOK) tool. The next level of student group is assigned a task aligned with DOK level three, and the lowest performing group assigned to a DOK level two aligned task. In a grade-three reading lesson plan, students are to be grouped by reading level and assigned to read the same single text across all groups. Although there are differentiated assignments, the lesson plan shows that students in tiers one and two are to receive identical assignments, without the benefit of scaffolded materials or differentiated teaching strategies. Additionally, the lesson plan states that a scaffold in place for MLLs is that the teacher will “Help students understand the idiom on p. 39” and that “[MLLs] may not understand how to use quotation marks. Explain that writers use quotation marks to set off the words.” While these allowances are designed to assist MLLs, they do not empower MLLs with the tools they could use to more effectively engage with the material.
Additional Finding

Quality Indicator: 1.2 Pedagogy  
Rating: Developing

Findings

Teaching practices are beginning to reflect a set of beliefs that students learn best when they are engaged in student-centered conversations guided by a protocol. Student discussions inconsistently reflect high levels of student participation.

Impact

Teaching practices are informed by the Danielson Framework for Teaching. While students share work with partners and express understanding of math concepts through movement, there are limited opportunities for them to engage in appropriately challenging tasks, take ownership of their own learning, or demonstrate higher order thinking in their work products.

Supporting Evidence

- Across classrooms, teaching practices are becoming aligned with the articulated belief that students learn best when they are required to conduct work using the Think, Write, Pair, Share protocol. During a grade-four ELA lesson, students thought about how relationships between the characters were changed throughout the novel, Lunch Money. Students were then asked to write about their thoughts, pair with another student, and share their thoughts with each other. Similarly, students in a grade-five ELA lesson were engaged in the same protocol as they considered the key details that they could cite that would help them to identify and support their determination of the theme of a story.

- Although students were asked to discuss prompts and content with partners and larger student groups in other classes, there were also classes during which students neither wrote and shared their products with partners, nor talked with partners. For example, during a grade-three Integrated Co-Teaching (ICT) ELA lesson, students being taught by one of the co-teachers were engaged in conversations with each other, while the students who were working with the other co-teacher were not working in partnerships of any kind. Students in a grade-five class were asked to turn to a partner and discuss the steps they took to answer a question without the use of a protocol to guide their conversations. Additionally, there were multiple lessons observed during which students were not asked to either think or write with the goal of sharing with a partner.

- During a grade-five ELA class, students managed the whole-group share-out of their partner-based conversations by encouraging each other to discuss the details they shared and to identify more complex synonyms as they shared. During a kindergarten lesson, students worked on their identified needs at one of four stations on either guided reading, increasing their phonemic awareness through tactile activities, or by engaging with an interactive video presentation. However, there were also lessons during which students were able to opt-out of participating. For example, during a grade-three ELA lesson, all responses to a prompt were directed to the teacher, with no opportunity for students to engage with each other. The only opportunity for students to talk with each other was in identifying the definition of a word. Students in a mixed-grade kindergarten through grade-two class sat at one of three stations. However, multiple students were off-task for the duration of the class visit. Additionally, classes were visited across grade and content areas during which students were not able to participate due to teacher-centered discussions or they opted-out of station-based activities.
Additional Finding

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Quality Indicator:</th>
<th>2.2 Assessment</th>
<th>Rating:</th>
<th>Proficient</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>

Findings

Across classrooms, teachers use rubrics and checklists that are aligned with the school’s curricula to inform feedback to students. Teachers use common assessments to determine student progress toward goals.

Impact

Students utilize teachers’ actionable feedback to increase their achievement. Teachers use data from online and teacher-designed assessments to adjust student groups, and develop the structure and content of academic intervention periods.

Supporting Evidence

- Student work samples across subject areas include teacher-written actionable feedback that students use to improve their work. For example, students were advised on written assignments to avoid repeating the same word and to search for synonyms to use in their place, include additional text-based evidence to support their claims, and analyze the evidence that they use. Feedback further indicated that they should ensure that the subject of each sentence is clear when using pronouns, and increase their use of transitional phrases. Students were also advised to pay close attention to their use of writing mechanics, such as indenting each paragraph and ending them with a concluding sentence, and using appropriate punctuation. Similarly, feedback that guides students to include additional evidence to support their claims and to analyze that evidence was noted on samples of social studies work.

- Actionable teacher feedback written on math assignments focused students on the value of using a distributive property chart to write out multiple equations and to use a Venn diagram as a guide for narratively discussing math data in separate paragraphs. Additionally, students were advised to add details to support arguments over similarities and differences, and use different strategies in order to thoroughly check answers. Students were also reminded to discuss the rationale behind their choices of strategy, and increase their use of math academic vocabulary. Feedback on science assignments drew students’ attention to using the academic vocabulary charts to both understand questions, and appropriately respond to them.

- School leaders and teachers use the data from common assessments to form student groups, determine curricular adjustments, and decide on schoolwide instructional foci. For example, the data from weekly grade-based quizzes are used to determine students’ placement within groups, and the tasks to which they are assigned during academic intervention periods. This data is also used by grade-based teams to guide their inquiry work and common planning. Teacher-developed common writing prompts are administered at the beginning of each year. The data from this assessment are used by teachers in the design of student groupings that are subsequently modified once the mid-year writing prompt is administered and the resulting data are analyzed.
### Additional Finding

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

**Findings**

High expectations are consistently conveyed to staff through documents and PD, with a system of accountability that is aligned to the Danielson *Framework for Teaching*. The school provides ongoing information to families regarding student progress toward college and career readiness.

**Impact**

The faculty handbook, weekly newsletters, and PD help staff members understand the high expectations to which they are held. A family handbook, monthly newsletters, and progress reports provide opportunities for families to understand student progress toward meeting standards.

**Supporting Evidence**

- The faculty handbook includes descriptions about how all aspects of the instructional program address the focus for the current school year. Various facets of the Danielson *Framework for Teaching* are addressed, including the integral components of well-designed lessons, different teaching strategies and materials to make sure all students have access, and embedding assessments into instruction. Additionally, policies regarding homework assignment design, schoolwide grading, and the classroom observation process are detailed, along with expectations regarding professionalism and day-to-day operations for all staff. Other topics include the maintenance of a supportive classroom environment, praising students, classroom appearance, and a classroom social contract template.

- The principal also shares high expectations with teachers through a weekly newsletter. This resource includes general announcements and reminders, tips on effective lesson planning, and methods for checking student understanding during a lesson. Additionally, weekly newsletters include scheduling information for classroom observations, the primary components of the Danielson *Framework for Teaching* that will serve as the focus for classroom observations, as well as upcoming events on the school calendar.

- High expectations are communicated to families through a family handbook. This handbook includes sections that detail the homework policy, assessments, remediation and intervention plans, as well as the instructional program and academic expectations to which students will be held. Additionally, this resource includes information on how families can get involved through volunteer opportunities, the dates on which parent-teacher conferences will occur, the student-led nature of those conferences, as well as behavioral expectations for students and steps that they can take to resolve problems. Daily scheduling concerns such as busing, late pickups, attendance and punctuality, and other school and citywide policies are included. Families also receive monthly grade-based newsletters. Information on upcoming events is shared in these newsletters along with the writing, reading, math, social studies, and science topics being covered in class. Links to online resources are also shared. Additionally, student achievement progress reports are shared with families during the winter and spring of each school year.