Quality Review Report

2019-2020

The Children’s Lab School
Elementary 24Q343
45-45 42Nd Street
Queens
NY 11104

Principal: Brooke Barr

Dates of Review:
October 29, 2019 - October 30, 2019

Lead Reviewer: Jerry Brito
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


School Quality Ratings

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Instructional Core</th>
<th>Area</th>
<th>Rating</th>
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<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>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>Additional Finding</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>Area of Focus</td>
<td>Proficient</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>Area of Celebration</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>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>Proficient</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>3.4 High Expectations</th>
<th>Rating:</th>
<th>Well Developed</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>

Findings

School leaders consistently communicate high expectations to the entire staff using tools such as the staff handbook. School leaders and staff effectively communicate to families expectations connected to a path to college and career readiness.

Impact

Communication and professional development around high expectations results in a culture of mutual accountability. Partnerships with families support students in their progress toward college and career readiness.

Supporting Evidence

- The staff handbook outlines the academic and operational frameworks used to inform the school’s operation. A key feature of the handbook is an in-depth explanation of Responsive Classrooms, which is a research-based initiative that supports the development of engaging academics, developmentally appropriate teaching, positive community, and effective management. The handbook outlines expectations regarding teaching, classroom set-up, and student management aligned with the Responsive Classrooms program. In addition, the handbook details expectations centered on unit and lesson planning, professional development (PD) protocols, and how to set up teachers’ data binders. For example, the portions related to PD sessions outline the roles of session facilitators and the need to develop next steps at the end of each session. The handbook also suggests protocols such as the Tuning Protocol to frame PD sessions. Finally, the handbook provides a clear explanation of expectations related to teacher evaluations aligned to the Danielson Framework for Teaching.

- School leaders communicate high expectations to staff through a weekly newsletter titled News You Can Use. In a March newsletter, teachers were reminded of a workshop on cultural sensitivity, the completion of reports in preparation for Parent-Teacher Conferences (PTC), and protocols for teacher intervisitations to develop teachers’ instructional practices. The newsletter also included a section title Life-Long Learners Question of the Week, which focuses on various academic issues pertinent to the school. In this issue, school leadership focused on questioning techniques, including how to increase the quality of student questions and how to incorporate questions into Know-Want to Learn-Learn (KWL) charts. In a meeting with teachers, it was expressed that communication with school leadership is open and clear, which facilitates their work.

- School leaders issue a parent handbook that outlines the school’s mission, instructional vision, procedures and programs. For example, the parent handbook explains the school’s core values and the instructional vision known as “Ground and Sky.” The instructional vision references the idea that students need to be well-grounded in core academic areas (ground) while also tapping their creativity through in-depth explorations in social studies, science and the arts (sky). In addition, the school issues a document to families explaining the Responsive Classrooms program. The document explains the origins of the program, what the program looks like in the classroom, and where parents can find more information related to the program. In reviewing submitted documents and a parent meeting, it is clear that school leadership and staff effectively communicate expectations that will help parents prepare their children for college and careers.
Findings

School leaders and teachers use common assessments such as the Measure of Academic Progress (MAP) to determine student progress. Across classrooms, teachers consistently use ongoing checks for understanding.

Impact

Although data is used to adjust instruction, it does not yet reveal that there has been an increase in mastery for students across all grades and subjects. In addition, while some teachers are making effective adjustments to instruction based on in-class formative assessments, this was not observed across a vast majority of classrooms.

Supporting Evidence

- Teacher use assessment data to modify and adjust instruction. For example, MAP data is collected at specific points throughout the school year to determine student progress in reading and math. In a third-grade beginning-of-year MAP assessment in math, it was determined that 28 percent scored in the low range and 43 percent in the low average range. A deep dive into the data showed that number and operations, geometry and algebraic thinking were the areas in which most students scored in the low range. Third-grade teachers developed next steps to address these areas, including embedding these in problem-of-the-day and math investigations. In a fifth-grade analysis of reading level data, student proficiency levels at the beginning of the current school year were compared to the end of the previous school year. This data demonstrated that reading levels were stagnant or regressed over the course of the summer.

- Teachers use assessment data to monitor and track progress among Multi-Lingual Learners (MLLs). In an analysis of a second-grade class, MLLs’ reading level data was analyzed for the purpose of creating homogenous student groups. It was determined that half the MLLs scored at a first-grade reading level. This led to the teacher forming an instructional group that will focus on letter sounds, phonemic blends, and digraphs. The teacher also created a reading goal of increasing letter sound knowledge. In an analysis of fourth- and fifth-grade New York State English as a Second Language Aptitude Test (NYSESLAT), it was determined most MLLs scored high on the speaking, reading and writing modalities. The lowest performing area was in the listening modality. It was determined that MLLs in this group need an infusion of listening activities, including the use of audio books and podcasts. Although data analysis is regularly conducted in all content areas, it was not evident how this analysis leads to increased student mastery.

- Across classrooms, checks for understanding are conducted to make adjustments to instruction. In a second-grade literacy classroom, students were learning the meaning of the word sizzle, which is a vocabulary word used in a story they were reading. At one point, the teacher asked students to engage in partner talk to discuss which of the pictures presented represented the meaning of the word. As students engaged in discussions, the teacher listened to various partnerships. She stopped the class and said that some of the discussions taking place did not fall within expectations of a proper, focused discussion. The teacher reminded them of the expectations when engaged in partner talk. Although there was evidence to show that teachers are checking students’ understanding, this did not result in adjustments to instruction across a vast majority of classrooms.
Additional Finding

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

School leaders and faculty ensure that curricula are aligned to State standards through the arc of learning documents. Rigorous habits and higher-order thinking skills are emphasized in curricula and academic tasks.

Impact

Integration of State standards has resulted in coherence that promotes college and career readiness for all students. Emphasis on rigorous habits and higher-order skills require that all students demonstrate their thinking.

Supporting Evidence

- School leaders and faculty ensure that curricula are strategically aligned to the State standards and promote college and career readiness for all students. School leadership and teachers have developed the arc of learning for all grades and content areas, which outlines the specific learning expected over the school year, the assessments protocols to be used, and the standards to be addressed in a given month. In a second-grade math arc of learning document, standard-aligned topics such as place value and measurement are cited to be taught during specific times in the year. In addition, the document outlines the essential questions to be posed during lessons to guide student learning. The document also allows teachers to access unit checklists and assessments. In a fifth-grade English Language Arts (ELA) arc of learning document, topics such as text complexity, civil rights, and poetry are outlined over a ten-month period. End-of-unit projects, unit-specific texts, and the aligned standards are clearly presented. A review of documents shows that the standards are strategically embedded into curricula documents, allowing teachers to plan lessons that promote college and career readiness.

- Unit plans have embedded rigorous academic tasks and higher-order skills so that a diversity of learners demonstrate their thinking. In a social studies unit plan, first-grade students are focused over a three-month period on learning the different aspects involved in the production of food. The unit plan outlines essential questions to guide students' learning, a variety of tasks teachers can use in their lesson planning aligned to students' proficiency levels, texts such as books and articles to be used, and specific skills such as interviewing that students are expected to master by the end of the unit. The document also presents possible misconceptions teachers may encounter during the unit and ways to address them. In a second-grade reading unit plan, students are expected to learn how to read, comprehend, and talk about books with their peers. The unit plan presents various texts to be used such as Jamaica Louise James, discussion protocols to be used by students, and differentiated supports such as sentence stems. A review of unit plans across grades and contents areas reveal an emphasis on providing students with rigorous tasks that address higher-order skills appropriate to students' needs.

- Lesson plans are designed to be rigorous and students must demonstrate their thinking. In a second-grade reading lesson plan, students are expected to learn how to retell the important parts of a story to a partner. The plan outlines the lesson procedures, including the use of an exemplar to support students to identify a story's problem and how characters deal with it. Visual supports and sequence words are used for students not achieving benchmark. A review of lessons plans indicated that tasks are rigorous and allow for multiple ways for all students to demonstrate their thinking.
Additional Finding

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Quality Indicator:</th>
<th>1.2 Pedagogy</th>
<th>Rating:</th>
<th>Proficient</th>
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Findings

Across classrooms, teaching practices are aligned to the curricula and reflect an articulated set of beliefs about how students learn, aligned to the “ground and sky” philosophy. Teaching strategies consistently provide multiple entry points into the curricula.

Impact

Teaching practices results in all students engaging in appropriately challenging tasks and demonstrate higher-order thinking skills evident in student work products.

Supporting Evidence

- School leaders expressed the belief that students learn best when following the ‘ground and sky’ philosophy, which involves students having a solid grounding in literacy and math skills which allows them to access more rigorous and engaging content. In a second-grade integrated co-teaching (ICT) class, students were engaged in learning how to retell the important parts of a story, including the story’s dilemma and how it was solved. Students worked in two groups, were determined by students’ skill proficiency rates. In one group, the teacher focused on teaching a phonics lesson while the other had students analyze key vocabulary such as kinder. Next, the class transitioned to a read-aloud of the book *My Rows and Piles of Coins* in which both teachers asked probing questions that focused on feeling words that allowed students to engage in partner talk. In a first-grade math class, students were tasked with learning how to divide shapes such as a rectangle in halves and fourths. Students were provided images of two dimensional geometric shapes with the purpose of identifying them. The teacher were asking students questions in order to have students justify their identifications. Next, students were asked to divide images by half. Classroom visits demonstrated that teaching practices align to the belief that a grounding in foundation skills is needed to access rigorous tasks requiring higher-order skills.

- Teaching practices are designed to provide multiple entry points into the curricula so that all learners have access. In a fourth-grade ICT writing class, student partnerships were engaged in a peer editing task in which students edited and provided feedback to their partner’s memoir. Both teachers were working with groups of students to provide extra support with one teacher focused primarily on the use of sight words. Student partnerships used a memoir-writing checklist to check their work. At one point, a student-generated memoir was presented to the class to model partnership feedback. In a second-grade reading class, students were learning the definitions of the words such as sizzling used in the book, *Hot City*. Students were presented with examples of the targeted words used in sentences. Visual supports were also provided for students, as needed. Students engaged in partner talk to practice using the word. Exemplars of the word sizzling used in the book and independent of it were presented to students.

- In a fifth-grade ICT literacy class, students worked in groups to analyze their independent reading books. Both teachers in the classroom were engaged with groups, with one teacher teaching a guided reading lesson while the other engaged student in a book club. Each group was provided guiding questions aligned with their reading proficiency levels to enhance their understanding centered on text analysis and make connections beyond the text. Students were provided supports to help understand the different components of a text. A review of teaching practices shows that teachers provide multiple entry points into the curricula aligned with their content-specific proficiency levels.
Additional Finding

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<tr>
<th>Quality Indicator:</th>
<th>4.1 Teacher Support and Supervision</th>
<th>Rating:</th>
<th>Proficient</th>
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Findings

School leaders support the development of teachers with effective feedback and next steps from frequent cycles of classroom observation. Feedback to teachers accurately captures strengths, challenges, and next steps using the Danielson Framework for Teaching.

Impact

Observation cycles result in an elevation of schoolwide instructional practices by allowing the implementation of strategies that promote professional growth. Feedback articulates clear expectations for teacher practice and supports their development.

Supporting Evidence

- School leadership, consisting of one principal and one assistant principal, support teachers through the Advance observation process. The number of observations conducted is based on each teacher’s preference, which is established during the Initial Planning Conference (IPC). During the IPC, school leadership and teachers establish professional goals for the school year known as hope and dream conversations. Since the assistant principal was recently hired, the principal has developed a plan in which they will both observe teachers collaboratively to develop a common understanding of expectations and best practices aligned with the Danielson Framework for Teaching. Teachers are observed teaching different content areas throughout the school year. School leaders have developed an observation tracking sheet in which next steps for improvement are noted. Feedback is provided both verbally and through written reports.

- School leaders provide effective feedback and next steps through the Advance observation process. In a one observation report, a teacher was provided feedback and complimented on going over key factors needed for animals to survive in their environments. As a next step, it was suggested that the teacher use student discussion to engage them in the content. It was also suggested that the teacher check in with all students to monitor all students’ progress. In a subsequent observation report, the teacher was complimented on delivering an effective lesson that solidified students’ previous learning. As a next step, it was suggested that the teacher call on multiple students to ensure that multiple voices are heard and to avoid the “fallacy of one voice.” In reviewing observation reports across grades and content areas, it is evident that teachers are provided effective feedback with clear next steps.

- Although school leadership establishes teachers’ professional goals for the school year, there is little evidence of alignment with observation feedback. In one observation report, a teacher was complimented on delivering a lesson that focused on using precise mathematical language. As a next step, it was suggested that the teacher provide extension activities to challenge student thinking. In a follow up observation report, the teacher was complimented on effectively implementing multiple components of balanced literacy. As a next step, it was suggested that the teacher reduce the number of activities to better focus on the lesson objective. The feedback provided in both reports did not align with the teacher’s goal of improving math instruction so that students who are falling below benchmark can achieve mastery. A review of observation reports and teacher’s goals demonstrated a lack of alignment between the two.
### 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 such as teacher leaders are embedded within the school community.

**Impact**

Collaborations within professional teams have strengthened schoolwide teacher instructional capacity and instructional coherence while data reveals increases in student achievement. Effective teacher leadership plays an integral role in key instructional decisions that affect student learning outcomes across the school.

**Supporting Evidence**

- All teachers are engaged in professional collaborations that promote the adoption and implementation of best instructional practices schoolwide. In a second-grade teacher team meeting, the focus was on determining what addition strategies students should use to solve expressions with more than two addends. The team was comprised of teachers with pre-determined roles such as facilitator and time-keeper. Team members first sorted student work products under six categories such as counting all accurately and using known math facts. Next, team members calculated the percentage of students that fell in a particular category, in which they were able to establish that nearly a quarter were able to count all accurately. Team members then engaged in a discussion to establish trends and patterns in each category, including that students who were not counting ones accurately had only a basic understanding of place value which impeded their ability to answer problems accurately. Next steps were then established for the team, including the use of strategies such as number talks and dialogue boxes.

- Grade-level teacher teams engage in cycles of learning informed by formative student performance data. In a third-grade inquiry meeting, team members were analyzing student writing data to determine how they can improve the quality of sentence writing with regard to grammar and syntax. In reviewing the beginning-of-year (BOY) writing benchmark data, team members established patterns and trends in students’ writing that included the use of sentence fragments, disagreement between subject and verb within sentences, confusion in using homophones, and the predominant use of conversational writing. For next steps, the team decided to teach a research-based writing unit focused on grammar and to review the parts of a sentence. In a kindergarten inquiry team meeting, team members were analyzing the data regarding phonemic awareness. In reviewing the data, team members noted that there was a need to focus on rhyming words, blending words, and beginning sounds. For next steps, the team decided to infuse phonics activities into their morning routines, lesson transitions, and literacy stations. A review of teacher team minutes schoolwide shows that teachers analyze student data to regularly revise their instructional practices, resulting in increased progress in student performance.

- Distributed leadership structures are evident in the grade-level teams, which includes teacher leaders who facilitate the inquiry work. In addition, teachers regularly conduct professional development sessions for colleagues. For example, the technology teacher conducts PD sessions for teachers centered on the use of technology to promote student learning. Also, teachers play an integral role in the hiring of new teachers through a hiring committee. During a meeting, teachers agreed that they have significant input in areas of instruction, hiring, and PD sessions.