Quality Review Report

2016-2017

P.S. 079 Francis Lewis

Elementary 25Q079

147-27 15 Dr.
Queens
NY 11357

Principal: George Carter

Dates of Review:
November 29, 2016 - November 30, 2016

Lead Reviewer: Claudette Essor

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. 079 Francis Lewis serves students in grade K through grade 5. You will find information about this school, including enrollment, attendance, student demographics, and data regarding academic performance, at http://schools.nyc.gov/Accountability/tools/report/default.htm.

School Quality Ratings

Instructional Core		
To what extent does the school...	**Area**	**Rating**
1.1 Ensure engaging, rigorous, and coherent curricula in all subjects, accessible for a variety of learners and aligned to Common Core Learning Standards and/or content standards	**Additional Finding**	**Proficient**
1.2 Develop teacher pedagogy from a coherent set of beliefs about how students learn best that is informed by the instructional shifts and Danielson Framework for Teaching, aligned to the curricula, engaging, and meets the needs of all learners so that all students produce meaningful work products	**Area of Focus**	**Proficient**
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	**Additional Finding**	**Well Developed**

School Quality Ratings continued

School Culture

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

Systems for Improvement

To what extent does the school...	Area	Rating
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	**Additional Finding**	**Well Developed**
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	**Additional Finding**	**Well Developed**
4.1 Observe teachers using the Danielson Framework for Teaching along with the analysis of learning outcomes to elevate school-wide instructional practices and implement strategies that promote professional growth and reflection	**Additional Finding**	**Proficient**
4.2 Engage in structured professional collaborations on teams using an inquiry approach that promotes shared leadership and focuses on improved student learning	**Additional Finding**	**Proficient**
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 the CCLS	**Additional Finding**	**Proficient**

Area of Celebration

Quality Indicator:	3.4 High Expectations	Rating:	Well Developed

Findings

Using communication tools such as PupilPath and grade-specific newsletters, school leaders consistently communicate expectations for high levels of shared accountability for staff and student learning across the school. All staff members communicate and partner with families to share expectations and promote student progress towards college and career readiness targets.

Impact

Effective communication of and support for high expectations result in strong partnerships among staff and families and shared accountability for improving achievement by all staff and students.

Supporting Evidence

- During the teacher team meetings, teachers stated that through a protocol requiring all staff to assess, collaborate, engage, and succeed, (ACES) school leaders set clear expectations for teaching and learning. This includes instructional practices aligned to the Danielson *Framework for Teaching* and to a schoolwide focus on formative assessment to drive the design and implementation of rigorous tasks, with appropriate supports and scaffolds to meet all student learning needs. Teachers stated that expectations for these and other practices, such as effective student-to-student questioning, discussion and immediate, meaningful teacher feedback to students, result in structured as well as voluntary collaborations among all staff, during and after school. School leaders hold all staff accountable for the expectations, through bulletins, handouts at staff meetings, individual and team discussions, and emails with reminders about the targeted practices.

- All teachers receive ongoing professional development from school-based staff, including all administrators, teacher leaders and an instructional coach, based on an analysis of the teachers' learning needs and those of the students they teach. Utilizing observation and teacher self-assessment data, school leaders work with all teachers to evaluate their progress based on the Danielson *Framework for Teaching* and the expectations of the ACES protocol. The school leaders follow-up with specific, timely and actionable feedback, including next steps for ongoing teacher growth as related to the expectations. Teachers also receive training to implement Teachers College Reading and Writing Project (TCRWP) curricula and participate in peer intervisitations focused on components such as questioning and discussion strategies and use of formative assessments in instruction. Both teachers and school leaders attribute improvement in student achievement in reading to the impact of these practices on pedagogy.

- All staff members communicate to families, expectations that are connected to a path to college and career readiness. Staff members provide information through grade level newsletters, information sessions, parent-teacher conferences, a monthly principal letter, and postings on the school's website. Parents are kept informed about the expectations and their children's progress, via Tuesday outreach sessions, class visits, emails, texts, and online data portals such as ClassDojo, Edmodo and/or PupilPath. Parents also participate in home-school partnership activities such as family fitness and healthy habits events, as well as content specific workshops that offer resources and tips for helping their children. A math workshop informed families about ThinkCentral, an online platform with resources linked to *GO Math!* tasks. An English as a New Language (ENL) workshop offered an overview of resources and expectations for families of English Language Learners (ELLs), and a workshop for families of fifth-grade students supported families in completing their children's application to middle school. Some families serve as advocates for school services, in partnerships with staff, which resulted in funding to upgrade the gym and to convert space in the courtyard to create a pond with Koi fish and a garden that help extend student learning in science.

Quality Indicator:	**1.2 Pedagogy**	**Rating:**	**Proficient**

Findings

Across classrooms students engage in high level discussions, including Socratic seminars, and complete intellectually demanding tasks. However, while lessons demonstrate applications of multiple entry points and at times allow for student choice of learning tasks, teaching practices do not consistently incorporate extensions of tasks for all learners, including advanced learners across all classrooms.

Impact

All students engage in rigorous tasks and discussions that culminate in high quality work products across grades and content areas. There are missed opportunities to consistently foster ownership of learning via task extensions for students at all levels of proficiency in all classrooms.

Supporting Evidence

- School leaders place emphasis on providing students with multiple opportunities to participate in high-level discussions so, across classrooms, teachers create tasks that require students to think deeply about concepts, question author's purpose and cite textual evidence to justify answers during discussions. During a Socratic seminar, grade five students utilized a Question Formulation Technique (QFT) and Costa's levels of questioning to create higher-order thinking questions, which they used to challenge each other's thinking about the text, *Wonder*. One question invited thinking about why a main character, Auggie, views himself as, "just a face." Another question challenged peers to consider, "Aren't we more than just a face?" Throughout the observed period all students engaged in a student-led discussion of themes, events and lessons learned from the interaction of characters in the story. The high level of peer-to-peer discussion observed in this class was not apparent in a few of the other classrooms, including a grade three writing class where discussion was limited to a brief turn and talk with a partner.

- All teachers create materials that allow for multiple entry points into learning tasks for all students. This was evident in a grade one writing class where the teacher used an interactive whiteboard to model the writing of a book about how to make pizza. She engaged students in listening to a read aloud of her description of steps for making pizza, before moving to a turn and talk with a partner to provide feedback about what was read, and ending with editing of their own draft of a "how-to" book. Student work samples showed writing on topics such as how to play Pokemon, ride a bike and make a circle. Students took turns giving and receiving feedback in partnerships that allowed them to review their work and that of a partner. Similarly, in a grade three math class the teacher assigned students to teams which worked on differentiated tasks, with support from manipulatives, as they explored how to multiply with the factor nine by applying distributive property in adding or subtracting numbers.

- The use of extensions of tasks to deepen student engagement in challenging work was evident in a few classrooms. In a grade two writing class after using a mentor text with pictures to model elements of story-writing, the teacher engaged students in partnerships where they completed a picture walk of texts to view features that they could incorporate in writing their own story about an animal of their choice. Students created drawings and shared ideas for their books with a partner. One student stated that her book would be all about cats and another showed the text and artwork that he had created for his book about how to care for a dog. While other teachers used task cards and choice boards to provide similar task extensions for individual or groups of students, these practices were not seen in some of the other classes. In a grade four math class two adults worked with small groups of students, while other students silently worked on workbook problems involving how to divide and record the remainder without any extensions provided.

Quality Indicator:	1.1 Curriculum	Rating:	Proficient

Findings

Guided by resources that include the *GO Math!* program for math instruction and Teachers College instructional plans for literacy instruction, across grades curricula are aligned to Common Core Learning Standards and illustrate the integration of instructional shifts. Using student work and data, teachers continue to refine curricula and tasks to provide all learners with access to engaging learning experiences across content areas

Impact

Ongoing alignment of curricula to relevant standards results in Common Core-aligned units of study with cognitively engaging tasks designed to accelerate learning by all students and support their readiness for the next grade.

Supporting Evidence

- Curriculum maps and unit plans illustrate emphasis on the design of tasks to support enrichment activities for students across diverse ability levels. Minutes of team meetings reference revisions of TCRWP curriculum units to add content from mentor and anchor texts to support access by all students. The use of supports such as visuals, glossaries, sentence frames, manipulatives, and photos are included in lesson plans and units, further promoting access to the curricula by all learners, including ELLs and students with disabilities. Units also show that teachers incorporate tiered vocabulary related to unit goals and differentiated learning tasks. Web-based resources, including e-books, *Imagine Learning*, RAZ-Kids, and Math on the Spot audio and visual connections, further contribute to student access to curricula. In addition, lesson plans show that high-level questions are consistent elements of task design across content areas. Teams of teachers are further refining curricula, including *GO Math!* units to provide scaffolds for all learners and task extensions for advanced learners.

- Based on a common curriculum-mapping template, all units of study reflect Common Core Standards and instructional shifts and highlight topics, essential questions, targeted skills and concepts, text resources, and assessments. Modules sequenced by topics and grades provide teachers with content from TCRWP curricula which offer Common Core-aligned tasks that incorporate English Language Arts standards and instructional shifts and infuse literacy based tasks across content areas. Math curricula include the Common Core-aligned *GO Math!* program and units of study linked to teacher use of EngageNY and exemplar tasks are providing additional focus on math instructional shifts. Pacing calendars aligned to the New York City scope and sequence, guide instruction in social studies and science. The Department of Education's *Passport* to social studies adds content for social studies instruction and Full Option Science System (FOSS) offers resources for science instruction at the upper grades. *Fundations* curricula provide activities to build phonemic awareness and foundational skills for students in kindergarten and grade one.

- Lesson plans and curriculum maps illustrate sample tasks requiring students to engage in activities such as composing explanations of inferences from texts, preparing summaries of reading selections, and writing on topics across content areas. A social studies unit on families requires first grade students to read about families from the past and compare and contrast them with today's families, in response to the essential question, "How do families grow and change over time?" A task for grade five students involved reading the text, *Hatchet*, to analyze author's craft and compare and contrast story elements and themes. Other curricula include topics and skills related to enrichment activities in areas such as coding via code.org, theater, art, music, and dance, and for project-based learning tasks. For example, a partnership with HAKS Engineering firm is exposing first grade gifted and talented students to explorations of Science, Technology, Engineering, and Math (STEM) content and skills as they learn about real world problems.

Quality Indicator:	2.2 Assessment	Rating:	Well Developed

Findings

Across the vast majority of classrooms, rubrics, grading policies and assessments, including TCRWP and *iReady* diagnostic assessments, are aligned to curricula and provide a clear profile of student mastery of targeted skills. All teachers implement varied forms of ongoing assessment and use the resulting data to inform instructional adjustments and promote self-assessment by all students.

Impact

Assessment practices generate meaningful feedback about student achievement, which drives curricular and instructional adjustments that address student needs and results in student awareness of their next steps for progress in learning.

Supporting Evidence

- Teachers implement formal assessments such as *iReady* diagnostic tests and TCRWP assessments that generate interactive data profiles of student reading skills and independent reading levels across grade one through grade five. Teachers also implement reading assessments daily, via observations of independent and guided reading by students. Through pre- and post-unit assessments and baseline assessments in reading, writing and math, teachers assess student proficiency and content knowledge related to Common Core-aligned performance tasks. For example, data from on-demand assessments and *Exemplars* tasks capture student strengths and needs in skill areas aligned to Common Core instructional shifts. In addition, teachers administer *GO Math!* assessments as part of a focus on building numeracy skills for all learners. Edmodo and Quizlet serve as formative assessment tools in science for upper grade students who learn science content as they complete online assessments.

- During instruction teachers check for understanding through strategies such as use of questioning, thumbs up or thumbs down signals and exit tickets. These practices emerged in classrooms visited, including a bridge class where, after checking in on small group work by students with disabilities, the teacher paused the lesson to note that responses to the task should include the main idea and not just a one word detail about a topic in the story. Notes on lesson plans indicate that based on ongoing assessment during instruction, teachers group students for varied class activities and re-group them as needed for follow-up tasks. During the student meeting, students described how they use rubrics and checklists to assess their work. In discussing an on-demand writing piece about, "Exploring Space: The Unknown," a grade five student described how he used a rubric with expectations for grade six, "to expand on the lead paragraph" of his essay.

- Driven by the school wide focus on ongoing assessment, unit plans include a culminating performance task and a rubric aligned to curricula and Common Core Standards, to evaluate and provide actionable feedback on student performance. All teachers create checklists and rubrics that are presented in a grade-level appropriate manner, via simplified student-friendly vocabulary so that feedback is meaningful to all students. This was evident in samples of student work on bulletin boards and in student portfolios, some of which contained copies of assessments showing scores and teacher comments about the student's strengths and areas of need. Other work samples displayed by all students showed teacher use of task-specific rubrics to provide feedback on student performance in all disciplines. A work sample for a grade four student showed a narrative report about a character who was bullied and fought back, and teacher feedback which praised the student for good use of elaboration, and advised the student to cite more evidence from the story and to introduce the main problem closer to the beginning of the next draft of the report.

Additional Finding

Quality Indicator:	4.1 Teacher Support and Supervision	Rating:	Proficient

Findings

Using regular cycles of classroom observations linked to student work and data, school leaders evaluate teacher pedagogy and incorporate elements of the Danielson *Framework for Teaching* and the ACES protocol, to inform feedback loops with clear expectations and next steps for teacher development.

Impact

School leaders have created teacher performance evaluation structures that yield effective feedback and identify next steps which are supporting the development of teachers and improving pedagogy school wide.

Supporting Evidence

- Observation reports and a calendar detailing observation cycles, the time-frame for evaluations, and the administrator assigned to each teacher, indicate that school leaders conduct frequent cycles of formal and informal observations and provide feedback and next steps to improve teacher pedagogy. School documents and meetings with teachers indicate that all teachers have been observed at least once, to date, and received face-to-face feedback on their performance. The examination of student work and data from assessments such as on-demand writing tasks and *iReady* reading and math exams, inform the accuracy of feedback about each teacher's strengths and areas for growth. Both new and experienced teachers receive targeted support from school leaders, teacher leaders and other members of the instructional team who help them align their practice to all instructional expectations.

- Instructional memos used to share feedback on best practices or areas of need, highlight targeted elements of the Danielson *Framework for Teaching.* For example, feedback to staff reflects emphasis on components such as proficiency in questioning and discussion and maximizing student engagement and includes actionable next steps for improving teacher practice as related to those elements of pedagogy. To help clarify next steps embedded in feedback, as part of observation reports the principal invites teachers to view instructional practices in other classrooms. They also advise some teachers to work with the grade leader, mentor or literacy coach, all of whom provide additional support for the delivery of effective instruction across classrooms. Feedback on teacher performance continues to strengthen teacher development, as evidenced by interviews of teachers and classroom *o*bservation data. Several teachers shared that feedback from school leaders has changed their practice and is positively impacting student learning, as evident in some student work and data in staff binders.

- School leaders have implemented an evaluation and teacher development system that allows them to observe a teacher individually or to team up with one or both of the other two administrators to visit some classrooms. For example, based on expectations linked to the school-wide use of ACES, all three of the school leaders visit classrooms together on Tuesdays to calibrate ratings of teacher performance and assess teacher efficacy in delivering instruction that reflects the ACES components. Feedback from these visits emphasizes connections between elements of the lesson and the ACES protocol, further building support for teacher growth. A review of observation reports indicated that each report includes a comment about effective use of formative assessment or a need for evidence of formative assessment, as a next step for the teacher. To further assess implementation of the ACES instructional focus, school leaders created a formative assessment checklist, which they use during observations. Observation logs illustrated feedback to teachers based on walkthroughs where other teachers and school leaders used the checklist to evaluate formative assessment practices seen in the classrooms visited.

Additional Finding

Quality Indicator:	4.2 Teacher Teams and Leadership Development	Rating:	Proficient

Findings

All teachers are engaged in structured professional collaborations across disciplines and grades and meet regularly to develop curricula and instructional interventions for students in the lowest third subgroup, and to share best practices for engaging all students in learning. Distributive leadership structures facilitate teacher collaboration with school leaders to make decisions about teaching and learning.

Impact

All staff members collaborate in sharing strategies that promote the attainment of school goals and infuse teacher voice in decisions focused on improving teacher pedagogy and student achievement school-wide.

Supporting Evidence

- The school utilizes teacher leaders across a variety of teams representing all content areas, to facilitate inquiry based activities during weekly teacher team meetings. Along with daily preparation periods, classroom teachers are programmed for planning sessions that they use for extended activities with members of their teams or with the literacy coach who turnkeys content from Teachers College workshops. For common planning, teachers of ELLs and students with disabilities meet with each other at least one period per week and with teachers of students in the grades that they serve. Teachers reflect on instructional strategies and identify ways to differentiate instruction, based on the needs of their students as identified via cycles of inquiry activities. For example, in alignment to the goal of improving numeracy and literacy skills for students in the lowest third subgroup, at bi-monthly grade level inquiry team meetings, teachers are identifying resources and strategies to strengthen learning by the targeted students in grades four and five.

- Records of meetings show that teacher teams engage in collaborative inquiry to further align units of study to reflect integration of Common Core Standards, with specific focus on assessment during instruction, close reading, text complexity, academic vocabulary, and high quality student to student discussions across classrooms. Using the ACES protocol at weekly team meetings, teachers review curriculum guides, develop assessments and design learning tasks, as they continue to focus on improving student engagement in learning and full alignment of curricula to focus standards and skills for each grade level. The addition of *Exemplars* to extend the unit focus on problem solving in math is an outcome of these activities. Minutes of team meetings also reference ongoing revisions of TCRWP curriculum units. During the teacher team meeting, teachers noted that team activities are strengthening their practice by deepening their knowledge of skills and content applicable to the current as well as the next grade for their students.

- In addition to grade teams that collaboratively work on curricula, instruction and assessment, there are teacher teams whose members work with each other and with school leaders, a guidance counselor, and a social worker, to refine school goals and implement school-wide protocols. Teams include grade level and supervisory inquiry teams, vertical teams, a school implementation team, a pupil personnel team, an integrated co-teaching team, a Response to Intervention team, and a professional development team that coordinates teacher-led professional learning. Teachers who are recognized for effective leadership or pedagogical practices serve as program coordinators, liaisons, administrative interns, mentors and/or grade leaders, some of whom collaborate with school leaders to analyze school data and devise school improvement plans. The principal credits teamwork for ongoing improvement in teacher pedagogy as per observations, and for improved student achievement as per *iReady* growth reports that show most students making progress towards reading goals. Teamwork is also at the heart of Friday clubs where teachers collaborate to offer a variety of co-curricular activities such as Zumba, bookmaking, board games, brain teasers, and fitness boot camp, to students in grades four and five.