Quality Review Report

2016-2017

P.S. 164 Queens Valley

K-8 25Q164

138-01 77th Ave.
Queens
NY 11367

Principal: Lisa Liatto

Dates of Review:
February 16, 2017 - February 17, 2017

Lead Reviewer: Debra Tasioudis

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. 164 Queens Valley serves students in grade PK through grade 8. 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**	**Developing**
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**	**Developing**
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**	**Proficient**

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	**Area of Celebration**	**Proficient**
3.4 Establish a culture for learning that communicates high expectations to staff, students and families, and provide supports to achieve those expectations	**Additional Finding**	**Proficient**

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**	**Proficient**
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**	**Proficient**
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:	1.4 Positive Learning Environment	Rating:	Proficient

Findings

Structures are in place to ensure that each student is known well by at least one adult who helps to coordinate learning and development supports through student engagement in the arts and clubs. Professional learning and other structures ensure strong family outreach and engaging student learning experiences.

Impact

Students are known well and have supports that align with their interests and needs. Family outreach and student learning experiences promote motivation, engagement, and the adoption of effective academic and personal behaviors of college readiness.

Supporting Evidence

- Structures are in place to ensure that students are known well and attendance is supported. In a student meeting during the review, students articulated close relationships with teachers, the guidance counselor, and assistant principal or principal. Teachers in a separate meeting also shared that additional supports were available to meet needs. For example, the Banana Split Club is a group that meets together as children face family structure changes, such as divorce, marriage or the death of a parent or grandparent. Teachers recommend students for the club, and the students meet two days a week with the school's social worker to talk through issues and work on skills such as resiliency, ensuring that students stay connected to school. Student attendance was at 96 percent at the time of the review, and supports are in place to individualize attendance supports for students who need it, through the parent coordinator and guidance staff.

- The school also provides supports for students who identify as lesbian, gay, bisexual or transgendered (LGBT). This work is led by the school's health teacher, who serves as the LGTB liaison, and personalizes supports for students who have come for support. The liaison shared that new trainings offered to her this year through the *Respect for All* program have really helped her and the staff to have the right words to talk to kids. Many teachers have also volunteered to have their classrooms identified as safe spaces and several students have taken advantage. Other training for staff offered this year to support social-emotional learning for students includes Yale University and NYCDOE offerings, such as *Life Space Crisis Intervention* training for school leaders and paraprofessionals, a therapeutic discussion strategy for transforming in-the-moment student crises into growth opportunities for students.

- Family outreach about students' social-emotional growth happens through daily interactions and messages and emails between staff and parents, Tuesday afternoon parent engagement, and other events, such as Family Game Night, Family Zoo Day, and the school's International Night, where the school's diversity is celebrated through music, food, clothing and dance. Use of an online platform, *Class Dojo,* is also growing and in use across grades two through five to reinforce in class behaviors such as hard work, kindness and community-building and to provide parents with up-to-the minute updates about positive student behaviors in the classroom.

- Student learning experiences promote the adoption of effective academic and personal behaviors of college and career readiness. Student agendas used across grades two through eight promote strong work habits and organization skills. All teachers set goals with the kids, and some have students create motivation mantras for themselves, such as "#ready!" Exposure to a variety of talents in the lower grades leads to student-selected focus studies in the upper grades such as dance, visual arts, or music. Additional opportunities, through partnerships, such as *Inside Broadway* provide students the opportunity to learn about the arts on Broadway.

Area of Focus

Quality Indicator:	1.2 Pedagogy	Rating:	Developing

Findings

Across classrooms, teaching practices and supports for students are beginning to reflect a set of beliefs about how students learn best. Work products and discussions inconsistently reflect high levels of student thinking and participation.

Impact

Across classrooms, teaching practices, including use of the workshop model, group work, teacher questions, scaffolds and supports, inconsistently provide students with learning opportunities that allow them to demonstrate high levels of student thinking and participation and produce meaningful student work products.

Supporting Evidence

- While school leaders believe that students learn best through use of the workshop model, partnered, or group work with high levels of collaboration, these strategies to engage students in learning were only evident in five of the ten classrooms visited. In an eighth grade science class, students worked in small groups on a physics design project to build a mini-golf course. Students were given a collaborative task, and the teachers modeled collaborative conversations for students to demonstrate expectations for group work. Though students spent a lot of time planning as their roles were unclear, collaboration and engagement was high. Students worked together to create and solve math problems, create design plans that showcased Newton's three laws of motion, and posters showcasing their work. This level of collaboration and engagement was not as strong in other classes where students were seated in groups on independent tasks or in group work that was unstructured.

- In half of the classes, teachers used the workshop model to teach students a skill or strategy, provide some guided practice and provide students with independent worktime, but the pacing of the lessons did not provide adequate student worktime, making it difficult for students to produce meaningful student work products. As an example, in a fifth grade Integrated Co-Teaching (ICT) class, two teachers worked with groups of students to guide instruction on how an author's point of view can affect their writing. Guided instruction asked high level questions of students, such as "Can you find another illustration panel that demonstrates the same idea?" However, students were afforded little opportunity to engage in student-to-student discussion or group exploration of the text, creating a missed opportunity for many students to participate and demonstrate their thinking.

- Across the classrooms, inconsistent use of scaffolds and supports were made available to students to ensure access to the tasks. In half of the classes, students were able to make use of the classroom environment to support their learning, such as use of models, anchor charts, or manipulatives. In a first grade classroom, students used base ten blocks with partners to create and model subtraction problems. In a second grade writing class for English Language Learners (ELLs), models were provided to clarify expectations for their comic book writing activity. This use of the environment to provide students with access to tasks is not yet widespread across classrooms.

- In the middle school grades, students were more often given opportunities to work with a partner as a support for planning, thinking and reflection, and in engage in student-to-student discussions. In one class, students engaged in a Socratic seminar, demonstrating high levels of student thinking and participation, though this was not the norm across classrooms visited.

Additional Finding

Quality Indicator:	1.1 Curriculum	Rating:	Developing

Findings

Curricula and academic tasks inconsistently emphasize rigorous habits and higher-order skills, and there is inconsistent planning to provide diverse learners access to the curricula across grades and subjects.

Impact

Opportunities are not always provided for English Language Learners (ELLs) and students with disabilities to engage in or have access to rigorous academic tasks.

Supporting Evidence

- Attempts at rigorous instruction were planned for all learners, including students with disabilities and ELLs, in six of the ten lesson plans reviewed. In some lesson plans, such as an upper grade science plan, opportunities for rigor and refinement for students with disabilities and ELLs were made clear through guided design tasks, and planned higher and lower level design and math tasks to engage a diversity of learners. Similarly, in the lesson plan for the Socratic seminar, the tasks for students were made clear, and planning included differentiation and modifications for students with disabilities and for ELLs, such as translated texts, discussion stems, and scaffolded note-takers to help students create warm and cool feedback for their peers. These high levels of planning to ensure that students with disabilities and ELLs were able to engage in rigorous tasks was inconsistent across classrooms, and three lesson plans observed included no discussion of specific tasks or rigor.

- In six of the ten lesson plans, purposeful scaffolding and supports for students with disabilities and ELLs were present, at varying levels. In a sixth grade English Language Arts (ELA) lesson plan on creating leads in argument writing, purposeful planning and refinement included focusing some students on particular types of leads, printing out notes for students with disabilities to give to them as the lesson begins, providing ELLs with charts and visuals and even some planned extensions for high achieving students to create leads for additional articles that were connected to, but not a part of the lesson. Other lesson plans included activities for high, middle, low students and ELLs, but nothing for specific learners or students with disabilities. A few lesson plans provided no provisions of planning to provide students with access to the task at all, demonstrating inconsistencies in planning and refinement of curricula.

- In some of the other reviewed lesson plans, differentiated tasks or modifications intended to support student's engagement at a higher-order thinking level are lacking. For example, a math curricular document states that, "Modifications to instruction will include time and teacher circulating to help students in need." Additionally, another math lesson plan states, "Students considered advanced will be grouped to solve subtraction problems at a higher level." The generality and absence of clear purposeful emphasis on rigorous habits for a variety of learners, limits students' individual ability to clearly demonstrate their thinking across most classes. This absence of purposeful emphasis on rigorous habits was also evident in a review of school unit plans, which varied widely in describing tasks. In a sample third grade English Language Arts (ELA) unit, there is a single culminating performance-based task for students, the creation of a scene with included elements. In an eighth grade math unit, the tasks are simply undifferentiated statements of standards, demonstrating a lack of consistency in planning for differentiating tasks.

Additional Finding

Quality Indicator:	2.2 Assessment	Rating:	Proficient

Findings

Across classrooms, teachers use assessments, rubrics, and grading policies that are aligned with the school's curricula. The school uses common assessments to determine student progress toward goals across grades and subject areas.

Impact

Assessment practices provide actionable feedback to students and teachers regarding student achievement. Results of common assessments are used to make adjustments to curricula and instruction.

Supporting Evidence

- Across classrooms, teacher use of assessments, rubrics and grading is coherent, and used to provide students with actionable feedback and next steps. In writing tasks in ELA, as well as extended writing responses across the subject areas, including math, teachers use rubrics to provide feedback and next steps to students. Across classrooms, and in student work shared by students during the small group meeting, student work had rubrics attached and teacher feedback. Two science pieces were shared, one with a rubric and another with a checklist that was used during a second grade hands-on science task about water retention in soil, and after to grade the student's work. Similarly, a fourth grade student shared feedback on her biography of basketball player, Sharyl Swoopes, with a rubric and clear feedback to "Write more insights after you share your evidence."

- Five of six students shared that their teachers use an online grading platform to share their grades on classwork, homework, assessments and projects. Teachers also agreed that use of the online gradebooks were widespread, and teachers shared that they were able to use the comment section to keep track of their written feedback to students on writing assignments, so that teachers and students were aware of their next steps over time.

- Teachers and school leaders are using assessment data at the class and grade level across the subject areas to make adjustments to curricula and instruction. Some of the school's common assessments are running records to assess reading growth, New York State (NYS) exams results in ELA, and math, science, and teacher-created exams as diagnostics at the beginning of the year. These are not for student grades, but to inform instructional grouping and set their focus within the early units. Similarly, end of unit assessments are used across subject areas to make adjustments to skills taught and the pacing of units. For example, *GO Math!* assessment data was reviewed across the grades to inform priorities, such as reading and creating graphs in grade three. Similarly, teachers use *Castle Learning* pre- and post-assessments to determine student progress over time and set priorities in other areas, such as the US History Regents course where student gains in some topics and needed interventions in others were noted, such as the rise of industrialization and interpreting historical documents.

- The school also uses the released NYS exam multiple choice questions to create exams in ELA and math to ensure that kids are getting extra standard based support in Academic Intervention Services (AIS). Teachers use running records or *Ed Performance* to assess student reading levels throughout the year to measure student progress overtime in reading. Students shared that they knew their reading levels and used them to select books in the classroom.

Additional Finding

Quality Indicator:	3.4 High Expectations	Rating:	Proficient

Findings

School leaders consistently communicate high expectations, including professionalism, instruction, communication, and other elements of the Danielson *Framework for Teaching.* School leaders and staff consistently communicate expectations that are connected to a path to college and career readiness.

Impact

Training, and a system of accountability for the school leaders' expectations, are supporting teachers and staff in meeting expectations. Families receive ongoing feedback that helps them to understand student progress toward high expectations.

Supporting Evidence

- School leaders articulate clear expectations for staff for professionalism, instruction, and communication through ongoing professional learning, including a September conference where guidance articulates clear expectations. Expectations are connected to other professional learning activities throughout the year, including faculty conferences, team meetings, and individualized learning opportunities. Ongoing feedback and accountability is demonstrated through teacher observation records. Partnered or group work, a clear expectation for student learning, was mentioned in every observation report reviewed, either as a commendation, or a next step. Regular classroom walkthroughs are also conducted by school leaders to evaluate adherence to school policies, such as teaching points and evidence of targeted writing practices, student goal setting, and assessment practices.

- School leaders and teachers consistently communicate expectations that are connected to college readiness and help families to understand the school's expectations, as well as the expectations of the Common Core Learning Standards. Other school events, such as the Annual Parent Advisory Council Night, make schoolwide expectations, such as discipline, grading and assessment, and content area instruction clear. School records demonstrate many well-attended events aimed at helping parents to understand expectations through evening and morning workshops and events, such as open houses aimed at ensuring that parents understand the transition into middle school. Agendas also reflect engagement with families about high school articulation events, of which there were six, offered in the mornings and evenings to ensure that parents have ongoing support in selecting an appropriate school and completing the high school application. At a meeting, parents shared that expectations for high school are shared with parents from the sixth grade on, and that workshops and opportunities to meet with the guidance counselor were numerous.

- The school has differentiated progress reporting to parents for kindergarteners, first through fifth grade, and sixth through eighth grade. Kindergarteners have two marking periods, three progress reports and a parent engagement night specific to their grade. First through fifth grade has three marking periods, and families receive three report cards, and there are two parent-teacher conferences and a parent engagement night. Middle school grades receive the most frequent progress monitoring, with four marking periods and report cards, as well as two parent-teacher conferences and a parent engagement night. These differentiated engagement nights and progress reports help families to understand their child's progress toward goals. The majority of the school's upper grade teachers and parents regularly use an online grading platform to communicate student progress to families, and lower grade teachers use a different, but similarly informative online system to communicate student progress. Parents also articulated that they have easy access to teachers and school leaders through email, phone, appointments, or during Tuesday afternoon family engagement time.

Additional Finding

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

Findings

Teacher teams consistently analyze assessment data and student work for students they share or on whom they are focused. Distributed leadership structures are in place so that teachers have built leadership capacity.

Impact

The work of teacher teams typically results in improved teacher practice and progress toward goals for groups of students. Teachers have opportunities for leadership, and a voice in key decisions that affect student learning across the school.

Supporting Evidence

- During the teacher team observation, the team observed included teachers across grades four, five, seven, and eight, and included general and special educators. The vertical team focused on student progress in utilizing the *Self-Regulated Strategy Development* (SRSD) approach to writing, an evidenced-based approach to ensure that students are reflective as they write and demonstrate improvement in structure and stamina in writing. Teachers reviewed student work shared by a presenting teacher, noting student strengths and weaknesses both in the work shared, and in their common approach to teaching writing in their classrooms. The team also spoke to shared improvements in their teaching through their time meeting together, and that the inquiry into writing had changed their outlook on paragraph development, and in their students' development of paragraph writing. Teachers were also able to demonstrate quantitative data to show student progress toward goals for select students in each of their classes through baseline and interim assessments given in writing before and after they began implementing SRSD.

- One student's work that was shared, an eighth grader with a learning disability, demonstrated significant growth from the pre- to interim assessment, in the construction of sentences, length of writing, and the quality of structure within the paragraph. In the first writing sample, the sentences do not follow a logical structure, but instead share disconnected facts about the effects of an oil spill on penguins. In the later writing sample, the same student's paragraph includes a clear introductory sentence, "The explorers [sic] character traits made them successful." Which is followed by four sentences that describe two characters and their traits. The writing sample also includes a concluding sentence, "They both were determined because they did not give up, and that made them successful explorers."

- Observation of the teacher team meeting demonstrated teacher leadership, in that the team met without a school administrator and teachers took on leadership roles, such as teacher facilitator and presenting teacher. Teachers shared that they regularly rotate roles within the team, enabling teachers to develop leadership capacity. The data team, another inquiry team within the school, is also a structure that enables teachers to display leadership and have a voice in key decisions that impact learning across the school. Teachers self-select to join the team, and act as leaders in their grades or subject areas, and as representatives for their grade or subject area across grades kindergarten through eight. Teachers meet regularly to review school data, make decisions about AIS instruction and materials, and to set a schoolwide focus on particular standards from analysis of schoolwide data.