

# Quality Review Report

## 2017-2018

**P.S. 140 Nathan Straus**

**K-8 01M140**

**123 Ridge Street  
Manhattan  
NY 10002**

**Principal: Melissa Rodriguez**

**Dates of Review:  
January 23, 2018 - January 24, 2018**

**Lead Reviewer: Liza Zarifi**

# 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. 140 Nathan Straus 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		
<i>To what extent does the school...</i>	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	<b>Additional Finding</b>	<b>Proficient</b>
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	<b>Additional Finding</b>	<b>Proficient</b>
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	<b>Area of Focus</b>	<b>Proficient</b>

# School Quality Ratings continued

<b>School Culture</b>		
<i>To what extent does the school...</i>	<b>Area</b>	<b>Rating</b>
1.4 Maintain a culture of mutual trust and positive attitudes that supports the academic and personal growth of students and adults	<b>Additional Finding</b>	<b>Proficient</b>
3.4 Establish a culture for learning that communicates high expectations to staff, students and families, and provide supports to achieve those expectations	<b>Additional Finding</b>	<b>Proficient</b>
<b>Systems for Improvement</b>		
<i>To what extent does the school...</i>	<b>Area</b>	<b>Rating</b>
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	<b>Area of Celebration</b>	<b>Well Developed</b>
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	<b>Additional Finding</b>	<b>Proficient</b>
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	<b>Additional Finding</b>	<b>Proficient</b>
4.2 Engage in structured professional collaborations on teams using an inquiry approach that promotes shared leadership and focuses on improved student learning	<b>Additional Finding</b>	<b>Proficient</b>
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	<b>Additional Finding</b>	<b>Well Developed</b>

## Area of Celebration

<b>Quality Indicator:</b>	<b>1.3 Leveraging Resources</b>	<b>Rating:</b>	<b>Well Developed</b>
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### Findings

The leadership team's use of resources regarding partnerships and reading supports is well-aligned to the school's instructional goals. Staff time is structured to enable consistent meetings and ensures teachers' professional responsibilities align with school goals and instructional work.

### Impact

Student work products including writing and assessments of reading reflect the alignment of resources to school goals. As a result of aligning staff time with instructional goals and work, teachers' instructional capacity has improved and all students are engaged in challenging academic tasks.

### Supporting Evidence

- In order to support the school's goal of increasing reading levels for all learners, including students with disabilities and struggling readers, strategic partnerships have been developed including the Reading Partners of New York, NY Cares, Educational Alliance, and a SESIS coach supporting students with disabilities. The Reading Partners partnership provides one to one tutoring for students in grades kindergarten through five, and is based at the school in a full-time capacity. Volunteer tutors from NY Cares provide additional reading support. The Educational Alliance provides after school programming that aligns with the instructional focus areas of the school. Student work products reflect increases in reading levels, for example in first grade, twenty-four students grew between two and four levels as measured by F&P between September and January. Student writing assessments for grades six, seven, and eight special education students reflect five out of twelve students meeting benchmarks for at least ten of the seventeen assessed skills on a writing unit assessment, improving from the previous assessment. For grades kindergarten, first, second, and third, eleven out of nineteen students met benchmarks on at least ten out of nineteen assessed skills.
- Student work products in science, such as a partner project on genetics, reflect an integration of technology, visual models and images, reading, writing, research, and discussion. Partnerships with Urban Advantage, New York University (NYU), and a grant that provided three-dimensional computers and science programs, support teachers to implement rich science instruction. The Urban Advantage partnership provides fifteen hours of professional development in addition to field trips for students, and a professor from NYU provides support for lesson plan content including a recent lesson on germ transmission. Student work products in science and informational writing pieces demonstrate the integration of texts, technology, research, and collaboration. A project in eighth-grade science on genetics incorporates research with a technology program, texts, and collaboration with a partner to produce organized responses to various prompts and scenario questions.
- Staff time is structured to enable weekly team meetings, classroom inter-visitations, and dedicated six week cycles of professional development every Monday. Use of staff time aligns with the school's instructional goals and focuses teacher time on instructional work. Content based teacher teams meet weekly to use student work to inform implementation of the curriculum and promote vertical alignment. Teachers have opportunities to visit each other's classrooms through a dedicated schedule connected to seeing the practices focused on in professional development (PD) or that support teacher development goals. As a result of use of staff time, all students are engaged in challenging tasks that integrate discussion, collaboration, and the instructional shifts. Improvements in teacher observations show increases in differentiation and small groups, and using assessment in instruction.

## Area of Focus

<b>Quality Indicator:</b>	<b>2.2 Assessment</b>	<b>Rating:</b>	<b>Proficient</b>
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### Findings

Across classrooms, teachers use assessments, rubrics, and grading policies that are aligned with the school's curricula, including Teachers College Reading and Writing Program (TCRWP) rubrics, New York State rubrics, and teacher-created rubrics. Teachers' assessment practices consistently reflect the use of ongoing checks for understanding and student self-assessment with checklists.

### Impact

Assessment and rubrics provide actionable feedback to students across most classrooms, although there were some missed opportunities to make feedback meaningful to students across the vast majority of classrooms. While many teachers make effective adjustments to meet students' learning needs, there were some missed opportunities to meet all students' learning needs and ensure students are aware of their next learning steps.

### Supporting Evidence

- Across classrooms, teachers use assessments and rubrics to provide students with actionable feedback on their work. Students reported receiving feedback including an area of strength and an area for improvement. Student who shared a writing piece that received a four on the rubric, with written feedback pointing out a strong thesis statement and suggesting transitions to show relationships between parts of the piece as an area to work on. However, there were some missed opportunities to ensure feedback is actionable and meaningful for students across the vast majority of classrooms. One student shared a writing piece that had multiple components of a rubric scored, including an area of growth that suggested working on grammar. When asked what this meant, the student was unclear and thought he should check his punctuation.
- Teachers use rubrics to provide students with scores and feedback on their work. A math task included a rubric with four components tailored to the math content of the task, and a student shared that he knew he did well because he got all the components right. Another teacher used a rubric to provide positive feedback on the student's use of dialogue and emotions in the story, and suggested adding more imagery details and checking for grammar mistakes as areas for growth. There were some missed opportunities to ensure feedback is meaningful for students, as some students knew their score and an area for growth, but were not necessarily clear on what they would continue working on to improve beyond the task that was completed. Another student shared a scored rubric for an informational writing piece, where she scored highest for her ending and her organization, and that she scored a little lower for transitions. She was unclear as to how she would work on transitions next time, but identified it as an area for improvement.
- Teachers' assessment practices reflect the use of checks for understanding and student self-assessment. In an eighth-grade science class, students could self and peer-assess by working with a partner and checking in with the other table pair. In a sixth-grade math class students used a rubric to self-assess as they worked in small groups on a task. There were some missed opportunities to use varied checks for understanding in the vast majority of classrooms to ensure that all students are aware of their next learning steps. Students in a fifth-grade English Language Arts (ELA) lesson worked in groups on an activity where they rotated around the room. The teacher circulated, but did not adjust the lesson in response to some groups finishing their task early or some students lacking a clear role in the group. In an eighth-grade humanities lesson, the teacher started with a writing activity and then transitioned into a Socratic seminar discussion. There was a missed opportunity to assess if all students were clear on the connection between previous content, the quick write, and the Socratic seminar to check for understanding and meet all student's learning needs.

## Additional Finding

<b>Quality Indicator:</b>	<b>1.1 Curriculum</b>	<b>Rating:</b>	<b>Proficient</b>
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### Findings

School leaders and faculty ensure that curricula are aligned to the Common Core and the content standards and integrate the instructional shifts including integrated reading, writing, and speaking instruction and a balance of informational and literary texts. Curricula and academic tasks are planned and refined using student work and data through collaborative teacher planning.

### Impact

Vertical content planning with common curricular resources builds coherence and promotes college and career readiness for all students. Refining plans with student work and data ensures that a diversity of learners have access to the curricula and are cognitively engaged in tasks.

### Supporting Evidence

- Teachers plan for integrated reading, writing, and speaking opportunities in ELA and humanities lesson plans across grades. A third-grade writing lesson used mentor texts for students to read and have an example of narrative structure. They also worked with a partner to talk through the story mountain organizer they created as a plan for their stories, before working independently on a first draft. An eighth-grade humanities lesson integrated research from texts and writing, and an opportunity to work with a partner to discuss one paragraph and give each other feedback. Similarly, teachers balance literary and informational texts through a humanities focus in grades six through eight. The eighth-grade humanities integrates content from informational texts with reading and writing standards. A first-grade social studies lesson integrates informational readings on differences between current times and the past in regards to school, family, and technology. As a result of planning and integration of the instructional shifts, teachers are building coherence across the school and promoting college and career readiness.
- Curricula and academic tasks are planned and refined using student work and data so that a diversity of learners have access to the curricula and are cognitively engaged. An eighth-grade science lesson provided access to the content for English Language Learners (ELLs) through translated worksheets, visual vocabulary definitions, and heterogeneous groupings. An eighth-grade ELA lesson indicated student groupings, use of two teachers to support, and guiding questions to provide access to the objective of the lesson and discussion opportunities. The ELL curriculum map is adjusted and refined based on student need, including planning visual supports for texts and lessons to build background knowledge, and student groupings are adjusted to ensure access to the curricula.
- Teachers refine curriculum maps and plans using student work and data including Fountas & Pinnell (F&P) assessments in the early grades. Teachers support students by planning additional phonics lessons and small group work to ensure all students have access to the curricula and are cognitively engaged. Lesson plans reflect flexible student groupings and targeted phonics objectives. Additionally, teachers complete small group intervention plans throughout each marking period to respond to student data and target instruction based on student need. A grade seven small group intervention plan indicated six small groups of students with specific targeted skills, frequency of meetings, and a monitoring tool to track progress.

## Additional Finding

<b>Quality Indicator:</b>	<b>1.2 Pedagogy</b>	<b>Rating:</b>	<b>Proficient</b>
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### Findings

Across classrooms, teaching practices align to the curricula and the school's beliefs about how students learn best, including through frequent opportunities for discussion, through planning strong questions and small group work.

### Impact

Across classrooms, student work products and discussions reflect high levels of thinking and participation through accountable talk, small group and partner work, and the integration of graphic organizers, visuals, and writing opportunities across content areas.

### Supporting Evidence

- Teaching practices align to the curricula and reflect frequent opportunities for discussion and small group work. Lessons utilize structures that support discussion such as Socratic seminars, workshop model, and small group work across content areas. Students in a sixth-grade humanities lesson practiced writing with a partner and used a checklist to give each other feedback. Students in an eighth-grade science class worked in pairs and small groups using a science computer program to investigate a genetics activity. Partners answered questions together, navigating the program and taking notes. Students in a self-contained special education class worked in pairs on a lesson on persuasive techniques. One pair watched and discussed a television advertisement, taking notes on what they noticed. Another group looked at print advertisements and took notes on their analysis of the techniques.
- Students worked in four small groups on a math lesson in a grade seven and eight self-contained special education class. The teacher supported one group primarily and then circulated to monitor the other groups. The paraprofessional worked with a small group of two students on an activity on proportional relationship and graphing. Each group worked together but was accountable for their own work. One group said they liked to work things out on their own first and then check in with each other. The teacher supported discussion in her group by asking questions such as whether or not students agreed with each other and why, and using math vocabulary in questions to support student thinking. Student work products and discussion reflected high levels of thinking and participation.
- An eighth-grade humanities classroom engaged in a Socratic seminar to evaluate and discuss the impact of a historical event on a group of people. Students used photographs and engaged in quick write activity to prepare for the seminar. Students in a first-grade class worked in small groups to create a chart about sorting images into two time categories. Students engaged in discussion to choose where to put the pictures, and then recorded any questions on the chart. A sixth-grade math class worked in small groups on differentiated activities. One group of students discussed math patterns and worked together to create graphs. Another group practiced presenting their work and had roles for participation. As a result of teacher planning and structures in place, student work products and discussions across classrooms reflected high levels of thinking and participation.

## Additional Finding

<b>Quality Indicator:</b>	<b>3.4 High Expectations</b>	<b>Rating:</b>	<b>Proficient</b>
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### Findings

School leaders consistently communicate high expectations for professionalism and instruction to the entire staff through staff meetings, PD, and observations. Leaders and staff consistently communicate expectations connected to college and career readiness and offer ongoing feedback to students and families.

### Impact

Leaders, including teacher leaders, provide training for high expectations for instruction and professionalism and have a system of accountability for those expectations. Faculty helps families understand student progress toward expectations through conferences and frequent communication.

### Supporting Evidence

- Staff handbook and beginning of year PD serve to set expectations across the school. Staff reported meetings and PD time at the beginning of the year to discuss the schoolwide focus and expectation for student-led discussions across classrooms as well as increased social-emotional supports. Teachers received PD on facilitating discussions and have been working on implementing Socratic seminars, small group and whole group discussions in classrooms across content areas. Kindergarten teachers discussed teaching students to formulate questions and partner work to support the schoolwide focus. Teachers receive detailed feedback in observations from the school leader to provide support and accountability to meet high expectations for instruction and communication with students. Teachers are supported through resources, PD, and observation feedback to implement social-emotional support structures for students including restorative circles, quiet corner, and monthly books that discuss character traits.
- Parents reported consistent communication with the faculty through conferences, progress reports, online applications that provide updates on behavioral expectations and classwork progress, emails, and phone calls. Parents feel that the teachers work as a team with parents and that the school provides sufficient resources and supports for families. Progress reports provide updates to families prior to report cards and conferences, and the school has dedicated time each week for families to come in and speak with teachers.
- Staff partners with middle school families, particularly in the eighth-grade, to support the high school application process and understand student progress toward expectations. The dean and guidance team meet with eighth-grade parents and students individually to find specific high school programs that match student need and interest. They help families to set up tours and emphasize the importance of selecting multiple schools on the application. Students reported feeling well supported with the process and having opportunities to visit schools and include more choices on their applications. Parents also reported feeling supported and that they learned about schools they were not aware of through meetings with staff. Parents and faculty also shared learning about the process beginning in seventh grade because of the importance of grades in that year for high school applications and for putting together a portfolio for arts-themed schools.



## Additional Finding

<b>Quality Indicator:</b>	<b>4.2 Teacher Teams and Leadership Development</b>	<b>Rating:</b>	<b>Proficient</b>
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### Findings

The majority of teachers are engaged in inquiry-based collaborative teams that promote curricular alignment and analyze student work. Distributed leadership structures are in place across the school.

### Impact

Teacher teams promote the achievement of school goals including advancing curricular alignment, the implementation of the Common Core Learning Standards (Common Core), and strengthen teachers' instructional capacity. Teachers have built leadership capacity and have a voice in key decisions that affect student learning across the school.

### Supporting Evidence

- Teacher teams meet weekly to work on vertical curricular and instructional alignment and analyze student work to inform instructional adjustments. Kindergarten team meets as a grade level team, all other teams are content-based for grades one through eight. The humanities team focuses on implementing the social studies curricular resources with the workshop model literacy instruction. The science team focuses on building vertical alignment in grades six through eight with the skills and standards students need to be prepared for the eighth-grade exams. The kindergarten team includes the general education and special education teachers and analyzes student work samples in order to plan differentiated instruction and support students' individual needs.
- The elementary math team met to review student work samples from a fourth-grade word problem to assess gaps in problem solving strategies for groups of students. The presenting teacher selected three samples and the team used a looking at student work protocol to discuss the work and identify potential causes for misconceptions and name instructional next steps. Teachers shared strategies including annotating the problem, discussing it with a partner, and using models as strategies to solve the problem.
- Teacher leadership opportunities include teacher ownership of facilitating PD cycles for staff, including a cycle on questioning that aligned with teacher goals and the school's instructional goals. Teachers reported the value of working together in cycles and having colleagues lead the work, as it created safe learning spaces and promoted collaborative relationships. Teachers value the opportunities to go back to the classroom to practice what was learned in PD and bring student work back to review with peers. The focused six weeks of work allows teachers to see impact on student learning and on their own instructional practice. A kindergarten teacher received training on a phonics program to use with her students last year, and is now turn-keying that learning to other kindergarten and first grade teachers to support struggling readers in the early grades.
- Distributed leadership structures support teachers to work in cohorts to make and revise curriculum maps. Teachers met last June to review data and begin planning with the curricular resources to build maps for the upcoming school year, with support from two teacher content coaches, for math and ELA. Teachers continue planning work in the summer, and finalize yearlong maps in the beginning of the school year. Teachers reported having opportunities to edit the documents throughout the year in response to student work and data, and that the maps have helped staff to integrate content areas and implement the curricula across the school.