Quality Review Report

2018-2019

P.S. 238 Anne Sullivan

K-8 21K238

1633 East 8 Street
Brooklyn
NY 11223

Principal: Harla Joy Musoff Weiss

Dates of Review:
April 10, 2019 - April 11, 2019

Lead Reviewer: Lisa Reiter

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. 238 Anne Sullivan 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**	**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	**Additional Finding**	**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	**Area of Focus**	**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	**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

School leaders consistently communicate high expectations to the entire staff through a handbook, memos, and verbal feedback. School leaders and staff effectively communicate and successfully partner with families around next-level readiness for students.

Impact

Communication and professional development (PD) around high expectations result in a culture of mutual accountability. Information sharing and communicating through written reports and an online program allow families to support students in their academic progress.

Supporting Evidence

- School leaders consistently message high expectations for improved teacher practice and the achievement of school goals. Communication and accountability are conveyed schoolwide in the instructional focus, classroom observations, and professional learning experiences. The instructional focus includes deepening instruction in math and writing. Teachers receive ongoing professional learning connected to key elements of the Danielson *Framework for Teaching* and teacher-identified needs. For example, there is a schoolwide focus on mathematical discourse through the use of rigorous tasks. In support of this expectation, teachers receive ongoing coaching from a consultant on strategies to engage students in mathematical discourse. Moreover, several teachers have received additional training and serve as resources for other teachers. Furthermore, teachers often request that school leaders model a new strategy for them in their classrooms. One teacher shared that after receiving feedback on implementing reading workshops, she asked an assistant principal to model for her. The teacher shared that the administration's open-door policy encourages teachers to request additional support and guidance. Therefore, high expectations are supported through training and result in a culture of mutual accountability.

- School leaders share high expectations with teachers via a weekly newsletter and staff handbook. Included in the faculty handbook are connections to the Danielson *Framework for Teaching*, such as expectations for designing coherent instruction. As an example, lessons should contain rigorous tasks and be aligned to the selected curricula. Teachers were all in agreement that they receive support to meet expectations. One teacher shared that she requested school leaders conduct an additional non-evaluative observation so that she could receive further feedback. Additionally, staff receive a weekly newsletter that includes upcoming events, due dates, and highlights of best practices seen at the school, such as the implementation of math lab.

- School leaders and staff members use phone calls, in-person meetings, newsletters, and an online platform to communicate with families. Monthly newsletters include suggestions for families to try at home to extend the learning. As an example, included in a grade one newsletter is information on a new informational reading unit, animal habitats. Parents are encouraged to ask their children about these habitats to reinforce learning in school. Also included in the same newsletter is a strategy parents can use to help children expand their sentences. One parent shared that the teacher taught him how to break apart words, which is a strategy to support spelling. The parent added that because of this additional work at home, the child's spelling and reading improved. Another parent shared that she was provided with a strategy to create a schedule at home to help her child balance play-time, downtime, and homework time. She reported that this strategy has led to an improvement in her child's overall scores and homework completion rate. Thus, there is a successful partnership between families and the school that supports student progress.

Area of Focus

Quality Indicator:	2.2 Assessment	Rating:	Proficient

Findings

Across classrooms, teachers and students use rubrics aligned with the school's curricula. Teachers' assessment practices, such as whole group questioning and conferencing, consistently reflect the use of ongoing checks for understanding.

Impact

While teachers provide students with actionable feedback, there are missed opportunities to consistently provide meaningful feedback that elevates student work to mastery. Teachers make effective adjustments to meet students' learning needs, but there are occasionally missed opportunities to adjust instruction.

Supporting Evidence

- Teachers use rubrics to assess student work and provide actionable, written feedback to students on essays, math assessments, or other culminating tasks. For example, one student's feedback on a math task included a glow that the student demonstrated a good understanding of how to find the volume and a grow to round off all measurements to the nearest tenth. Other examples of written feedback included, "next time explain which words helped tell you to subtract," remember to add enough detail, so the reader is satisfied and has as much information as possible," and "restate your main points in the conclusion." However, there were also some examples of feedback that did not provide students with clear, next steps for improvement. For example, some pieces of student work included a numeric score and only words of praise, such as "nice job" or "well-written." Therefore, while students received actionable feedback across most classrooms, there are occasional examples of feedback that is not as meaningful.

- All students agreed that teachers provide them with a rubric and feedback on most tasks. One stated, "We get our work back with feedback and try to improve on it the next day." As an example, a student shared feedback from a math task that stated, "Good, you seem to understand the problem and the solution." The student shared that this feedback was helpful because it reinforced a skill. However, some of the work students shared during the meeting did not include feedback that students could apply to future tasks. For instance, when a student received a numeric score of three out of four on a writing task, additional feedback beyond the language of the rubric that could have helped improve her writing to a four was not included. Thus, while students receive actionable feedback that can be applied to future tasks, meaningful feedback to achieve mastery is not yet evident across the vast majority of classrooms.

- Teachers check for understanding and make effective adjustments in their classes, as well as have students conduct peer and self-assessments. As an example, in a grade-six English Language Arts (ELA) class, after circulating and checking-in with students, the teacher, asked a small group of students if their revised sentence changes the meaning of the text. The students determined it did and rewrote the sentence. In a kindergarten class, the teacher assessed students' understanding of how to solve a word problem through whole-group questioning. While checks for understanding were consistent, there were occasionally missed opportunities to adjust instruction. As an example, in a grade-five class, some students worked independently to complete a task while others received a small group lesson with the teacher. The teacher used questioning and conferencing to assess student learning while in the small group. However, two students who were working independently were unable to complete the task. Furthermore, they were unaware of their next learning steps. Therefore, while teachers' assessment practices consistently reflect checks for understanding, there are missed opportunities to ensure all students are aware of their next learning steps.

Quality Indicator:	**1.1 Curriculum**	**Rating:**	**Proficient**

Findings

School leaders and faculty ensure that curricula are aligned to the Common Core Learning Standards and integrate the instructional shifts, with an emphasis on using text-based evidence and building a deep understanding of math concepts. Curricula and tasks are planned and refined using student work and in-class assessments.

Impact

Curricula promote college and career readiness for all students. All students, including English Language Learners (ELLs) and students with disabilities, have access to the curricula and are cognitively engaged.

Supporting Evidence

- Curricular documents across grades and content areas reveal consistent alignment with the Common Core and the integration of the math instructional shifts. For example, in a kindergarten lesson plan, there is evidence of the math shifts of deeper understanding and fluency. The plan includes that students will place numbers in order from zero to one hundred by tens. Additionally, students are tasked with solving and creating similar word problems. As another example, a task in a grade eight lesson plan includes academic vocabulary such as *outlier*, *scatter plot*, and *cluster*. Furthermore, students will collaboratively solve various transformations and include a written explanation on possible transformations that could be defined in the problem, thus demonstrating a deep understanding of the topic. A review of unit and lesson plans also reveals evidence of coherence through the spiraling of skills. For instance, geometry skills such as finding the perimeter and identifying lines and angles are built upon across grades.

- Evidence of the integration of the ELA instructional shifts is found throughout grade levels. For example, included in a grade three lesson plan is a task in which students use various texts to respond to prompts and questions. A grade six lesson plan also includes a task in which students use different texts about the Pony Express to write more complex sentences, using words like *because, but, or so*. There is also evidence of the inclusion of academic vocabulary, such as *convey*, *point of view*, and *author's purpose*, across curricular documents. Furthermore, students read a balance of literary and informational texts. For instance, a grade one science lesson plan includes various informational texts that will be used, and a grade three lesson plan includes a text on the Mojave Desert. Indeed, across grades students read narratives, fiction, and participate in guided reading or book clubs. Therefore, it is evident that the skills needed for students to be college and career reading are promoted in the curricula.

- Teachers use assessment data like benchmark assessments that include reading levels, end-of-unit assessments, and exit tickets to create student groups and supports to ensure access for all students. For example, in a grade six ELA lesson plan, students receive differentiated texts based on their reading levels. A grade three math lesson plan includes three versions of a task on finding the perimeter for students based on their performance levels from a previous assessment. Included in a grade one lesson plan are sentence stems to support ELLs' access to the task. Additionally, across grades and content areas, unit plan includes supports for ELLs and students with disabilities, such as sentence starters, front-loading vocabulary, and various graphic organizers. The inclusion of leveled support and other types of scaffolds ensures all students have access to rigorous tasks, such as making claims, writing arguments, and solving multi-step word problems, and are cognitively engaged.

Additional Finding

Quality Indicator:	1.2 Pedagogy	Rating:	Proficient

Findings

Across classrooms, teacher practices are aligned to the stated belief that students learn best through the workshop model and an inquiry-based approach. Teaching strategies consistently provide multiple entry points into the curricula.

Impact

As a result of shared beliefs by pedagogues across the school, students produce meaningful work products. Additionally, the design and delivery of instruction to include scaffolds for all students, including ELLs and students with disabilities, allow students to engage in appropriately challenging tasks and demonstrate higher-order thinking skills.

Supporting Evidence

- The core belief that students learn best when they are challenged in a nurturing, caring environment that follows the workshop model and an inquiry-based approach was evident across classrooms. This includes employing strategies such as small group work and student-centered tasks. For example, in a grade three math class, students solved a multi-step word problem independently and then discussed different strategies they used to solve the problem with their small groups. One student asked her group member to prove that the answer was correct. When the student struggled to explain her answer, the third student suggested she solve it using another strategy. In a grade seven science class, students examined different plant specimens using the microscope to determine which species are most closely related to an endangered plant species. The teacher asked the students to consider why it is important to find a substitute for this endangered species. Additionally, in a grade one science class, students engaged in a turn and talk to determine the light sources in different images. One student identified the light source as the moon while another identified lights from a plane. Students then wrote cause and effect sentences using the words *because*, *but*, or *so*.

- In a grade six ELA class, students worked in small groups to write complex sentences about the Pony Express. One student shared his sentence with the group, and another group member asked him to include the word *so* to explain the evidence better. Students in a grade three ELA class worked in small groups to identify text features and compare and contrast two animals within a given text. One small group discussed what happens to the homes of different animals when the tide comes in. One student said, "Water comes in and moves the animals home." Another student added that the vocabulary word was *tide*. Therefore, taken together, across classrooms, there is evidence that teaching practices reflect an articulated set of beliefs that lead to meaningful student work products.

- Across classrooms, students with disabilities and ELLs received supports such as anchor charts, differentiated graphic organizers, and leveled readings or tasks to provide multiple entry points into the curricula. For example, in a grade six ELA class, students received one of three different graphic organizers and texts about the Pony Express. In a grade five math class that included ELLs, some students received the math problems in both English and their native language of Russian. All students also had group discussion prompts to support them as they discussed how they solved the math problem. While all students in a grade three math class were completing the same multi-step word problems, as a support some students received problems that excluded extraneous words. Additionally, extension problems were included to challenge students who completed the task before the rest of their group. Furthermore, in a grade three integrated co-taught (ICT) class, students read and discussed various nonfiction texts based on their reading levels. Therefore, based on these and other examples, teachers consistently provide access into the curricula for all students.

Additional Finding

Quality Indicator:	4.1 Teacher Support and Supervision	Rating:	Proficient

Findings

School leaders support teacher development with frequent cycles of both evaluative and non-evaluative observations. Written feedback captures teachers' strengths, challenges, and next steps using the Danielson *Framework for Teaching.*

Impact

Evaluative and non-evaluative observations result in feedback that promotes professional growth and makes clear the expectations for teacher practice as well as the supports available to them.

Supporting Evidence

- School leaders conduct frequent classroom observations and provide feedback utilizing the Danielson *Framework for Teaching.* Each rated item includes specific, detailed evidence from the observed class to support the rating. Next steps for teaching improvements are included at the close of each observation report. School leaders use a cycle for observations that includes targeting teachers based on individual needs. Each school leader is also assigned teachers based on content or grade-level bands. Additionally, school leaders are mindful of the time between evaluative observations to be sure teachers have enough time to implement their feedback. Furthermore, school leaders conduct frequent non-evaluative observations and provide verbal feedback to teachers.

- Observation reports contain feedback that captures teachers' strengths and areas of need and are accompanied by next steps teachers should take to improve their practice and impact student success. For example, one observation report detailed the scaffolds that were incorporated into the lesson. The school leader went on to recommend that the teacher assess in the moment and provide students with immediate feedback on their progress. Additionally, the school leader recommended that the teacher record student feedback and use it to plan upcoming lessons. In another observation report, the teacher was commended for the student discussion. Next steps for this teacher included deepening the student discourse by having students develop their own questions for each other. During the teacher meeting, teachers came to a quick consensus that school leaders provide actionable feedback and follow-up to ensure feedback is implemented or offer additional support. For instance, one teacher shared that as additional support, a school leader modeled how to teach a reading strategy that had been provided as feedback to strengthen the teacher's practice.

- A review of observation reports reveals teachers successfully implement recommended strategies and demonstrate growth. For example, a teacher went from a rating of effective to highly effective in the Danielson component of "Using questioning and discussion techniques" after successfully implementing feedback to deepen student discussions by asking them to justify their responses. Additionally, the school leader commented that previous recommendations had been implemented and were evident throughout the observation. In another set of observation reports, after implementing feedback connected to engaging all students through discussion and the use of academic vocabulary, the teacher demonstrated growth in "Using questions and discussion techniques" and "Engaging students in learning." Therefore, school leaders consistently provide feedback and support that promotes teacher growth.

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

Findings

The majority of teachers are engaged in structured, inquiry-based professional collaborations such as vertical and grade teams. Distributed leadership structures are in place for teachers, such as serving as grade coordinators or leading professional development.

Impact

Teachers' collaborations have strengthened their instructional capacity and promoted the achievement of school goals. Additionally, teachers have a voice in key decisions that affect student learning.

Supporting Evidence

- Teachers meet weekly in their professional learning communities to review student work and the implications on teacher practice. Included in the instructional focus is to strengthen math instruction and foster mathematical discourse. During the math vertical team meeting, teachers analyzed student work from a grade eight math teacher. The team followed a protocol that included exploring how students interpreted the problem as well as identifying what was correct or incorrect in the solution. Additionally, the team shared different instructional strategies with the presenting teacher to help improve his practice and student outcomes. As an example, it was noted that students struggled to complete the problem and show all their work because the page was crowded and did not have space for students to work. It was suggested that the problem be placed on two pages to encourage students to show their work. This would also allow the teacher to see with which steps students were confused. Furthermore, it was suggested that the teacher create a chart or table that some students could use as a scaffold. The presenting teacher agreed that both suggestions were helpful, and he agreed to implement those strategies moving forward. As another example, in a previous meeting, it was recommended that a grade seven teacher provide students with a math problem-solving strategy for word problems. In the following meeting, the teacher reported that the strategy has been effective, as more students had successfully solved the multi-step word problems. Thus, the majority of teachers engage in inquiry-based professional collaborations that align their work to schoolwide goals and enhance their professional practice.

- As a result of inquiry-based collaborations, teachers have increased their instructional capacity. One teacher shared that since collaborating as a grade-level team, they have incorporated more writing strategies into the science and social studies curricula. She added, "Working together we create better lessons." As another example, a review of kindergarten team minutes revealed that the team is focused on improving student math scores. Along with student work, the presenting teacher identified a problem of practice, such as increasing the use of math vocabulary. Teachers then shared strategies to support the presenting teacher. One suggestion was for the teacher to model solving the problem out loud to reinforce math vocabulary.

- Teachers have a voice in key decisions that affect teacher practice and student learning. For instance, grade three and four teachers advocated for a new ELA curriculum. Teachers on these teams were charged with vetting different curricula and making a recommendation to school leaders. The teacher-selected curriculum was purchased for both grades. As a result of that adjustment, school leaders reported more coherence in each grade. Teachers are also identified to lead grade-teams and departments. One teacher shared that she serves as the grade eight and ELL coordinator. Moreover, teachers regularly facilitate PD for the staff. As an example, two teachers led a PD session on incorporating different writing strategies. Thus, teachers are involved in decisions that affect student learning across the school.