

# Quality Review Report

## 2018-2019

**P.S. 063 Author's Academy**

**Elementary 09X063**

**1260 Franklin Avenue  
Bronx  
NY 10456**

**Principal: Reinaldo Diaz Lens**

**Dates of Review:  
November 1, 2018 - November 2, 2018**

**Lead Reviewer: Phyllis Siwiec**

## 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. 063 Author's Academy serves students in grade PK 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		
<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	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	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

<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>Additional Finding</b>	<b>Proficient</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>Area of Celebration</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>Proficient</b>

## Area of Celebration

<b>Quality Indicator:</b>	<b>4.2 Teacher Teams and Leadership Development</b>	<b>Rating:</b>	<b>Proficient</b>
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Across grades and departments, most teachers meet regularly in structured collaborative planning and inquiry teams. Teams of teachers consistently analyze student work and data twice each month and develop instructional planning documents to improve student learning for groups of students they share.

### Impact

Teacher teamwork promotes the achievement of schoolwide goals related to the expectations of the Common Core Learning Standards and instructional shifts. The analysis of student work and data and resulting discussions about teaching strategies improve student work and strengthen teacher capacity across the school.

### Supporting Evidence

- A debrief session for a vertical team was observed. The problem of practice focused on reading and classroom discussions through meetings and Teacher Rounds, a process that helps teachers expose their classroom practices to other educators and enables them to learn from inquiry-based, data-driven feedback. The team analyzed and discussed student opportunities to engage in meaningful discussions around text to deepen their understanding. The school goals include improving questioning and discussion techniques. In addition to Teacher Rounds and a partnership with Early Reading Matters, teachers use Specially Designed Instruction (SDI) that is planned, organized, and meaningfully provides a systematic process that addresses the students' needs as identified in their Individualized Education Program (IEP) goals and objectives. The majority of teacher teams who engage in professional collaborations promote these initiatives, as shared by teachers, coaches, and school leaders. Teachers also shared that their collaboration through vertical teams in English Language Arts (ELA) and math helps them establish relationships and build trust with teachers who are not necessarily in their grade level or band.
- Teacher teams from kindergarten to grade-three meet regularly by grade with a literacy coach. An agenda included topics that addressed instructional goals of strengthening guided literacy and interactive read-alouds, as identified in the current schoolwide goals. The agenda for a grade-two team meeting included the topic "Interactive read-aloud: successes and challenges." Teachers discussed their successes, including activities where students were actively engaged and excited, effectively read short fables, and were responsive to listening comprehension activities. Identified challenges included too much time "on the rug," when students were not optimally engaged, a need to improve the use of meaningful interactive reading activities, attempts to incorporate longer fables, the use of appropriately leveled texts, and stopping too much. Teachers then shared their commitments to try various strategies and report back results the following week. Strategies included acting out stories to get students moving, teaching through metaphors for vocabulary development, and introducing text through real world connections. Teachers reported that the collaboration felt supportive and encouraged attempts at new strategies.
- Grade-level teams led by teacher leaders engage in collaborative inquiry to look at student work using a protocol and determine instructional adjustments to address the identified learning needs. They also look at data from iReady diagnostic assessments in reading and math to identify learning gaps and develop implications for teacher practice. For example, a grade-four analysis of an iReady math diagnostic assessment revealed eight small groups of students who had focus areas that ranged from identifying the number that is one more or less than a given number up to ten through comparing two fractions with the same numerator or the same denominator using a visual fraction model. The identified strengths and needs of each student and focus group also included a list of specific areas in which additional instruction with relevant student practice was needed.

## Area of Focus

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

Across classrooms, teaching strategies are beginning to provide multiple entry points into the curricula with math centers and hands-on learning while student work products and discussions are limited by a lack of differentiation and the dominance of teacher talk.

### Impact

There are uneven levels of engagement in appropriately challenging tasks and uneven demonstrations of higher-order thinking skills in student work products, including the work of English Language Learners (ELLs) and students with disabilities.

### Supporting Evidence

- In an observed kindergarten math class, the classroom was arranged with several centers with small groups of students seated at each one; all groups were focused on counting to ten. One group had a teacher with them for the entire practice portion of the lesson. They were practicing essentially the same procedures to build the number ten that the entire class had previously practiced. This was the group that needed reteaching and vocabulary development. The second group was building ten using interlocking cubes in towers and number cards. The rest of the students worked in small table groups and used spinners to trace the numbers as they were selected by the spinner. Students were able to explain their activities, what the number ten meant, and, in some cases, showed several ways to count to ten. However, multiple entry points were not demonstrated in every one of the observed classes. In most classes, teacher-talk and whole group instruction dominated the lessons with limited student voice, and materials were not differentiated to address students' various learning needs.
- Instructional strategies were observed in some lessons that provided multiple entry points to all students, including ELLs and students with disabilities. New math and science programs were selected to improve student discussions and student work; however, there was uneven implementation across the school, as observed in classrooms. Students struggled as they tried writing on post-it notes that were too small, rendering them illegible. Classroom discussions focused around procedural questions instead of moving to higher-order questions and small group discussions. Some students were silent for the entire group work time with no teacher or student intervention to share with their group, contributing to a lack of productive thinking and discussion.
- During a grade-four writing lesson, the teacher asked the whole class, where students were working in pairs, "How does working together make you a better writer?" Students responded with answers that included, "...you either agree or disagree and share why and that makes me get stronger", and "working with a partner helps with your spelling." In a math class, students were silent as they each worked independently with productive struggle to solve the problem before sharing with a partner and then deciding with all of the students at the table one strategy to present to the rest of the class. Once the independent time was completed, the students discussed with partners their own solutions and asked each other clarifying questions. However, in other classes, teachers engaged in whole group instruction by telling information rather than engaging students in discussions that could lead to understanding, as in a vocabulary lesson where students were given dictionary meanings that were read aloud by the teacher, with students copying down those definitions in silence.

## 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 through reviews of written curricula that designate instructional shifts. Teachers plan and refine curricula and academic tasks using student work and data, as demonstrated in both lesson and unit plans.

### Impact

Intentional decisions are made that build coherence and promote college and career readiness for all students so that diverse learners, including ELLs and students with disabilities, have access to the curricula and tasks that are cognitively engaging.

### Supporting Evidence

- Teachers are provided with time during professional development (PD) and team meetings to plan and evaluate curriculum and instruction. During unit planning, teachers use the Common Core as a guide to plan units and individual lessons. In addition, teachers use student data to plan next steps and address any learning gaps or successes from a current unit. Thus, lesson plans and curricular units of study address the Common Core and how they align to grades and content areas vertically, including a section for focus standards, which are those standards deemed essential for grade-level mastery by teachers. Instructional shifts were integrated four years ago through common planning time. They align to key standards addressed in each unit. In grades three through five, instructional shifts include writing from sources. In kindergarten through grade five, there is a balance between non-fiction and fiction texts. At all grade levels in math, fluency, problem-solving, and discussions using math vocabulary are stressed as in planning for math conversations and multiple solutions to word problems using *Number Talks*, *Algebra for All*, *Carnegie Math*, and *5 Practices*.
- Curricular templates were developed in specific content areas. In ELA, each unit of study across grades includes goals, essential questions, enduring understandings, and a final unit product with success criteria. Additionally, unit pre- and performance-based assessments are described, with anchor and supporting texts and focus standards. In math, each unit has a description and a major cluster of standards for each topic. There are big ideas, essential questions, content understandings written as “students will learn...”, and skills written as “students will be able to...” Formative and summative assessments are listed, with materials and charts that illustrate and model specific strategies. Coherence is enhanced by the shared unit designs that contribute to teachers across grades collaborating on developing students’ skills through the grades, as expressed by teachers and coaches.
- After analyzing the grade-five State math assessment of spring 2018, school leaders and teachers noticed that their students had difficulty with math work that involved fractions. They then studied the grade-four results and noticed the lack of competencies with fraction work. A plan was developed to strengthen understanding and practice with fractions in grade-four. Coherence was also developed so that grade-two and -three teachers also increased the amount of time dedicated to fraction work for all learners. Interactive writing was another area of concern that was identified through the analysis of student work and data and subsequently redesigned. Another year-end insight of the State ELA assessment showed that grade three through five students have to respond in written form to text. In kindergarten through grade-two, students do not practice this. Therefore, curricula were revised so that, through interactive writing “...we can together with students respond to the text over days, and revise and edit the text together” as lower grade teachers wrote in planning documents.

## Additional Finding

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

Across most classrooms, teachers use and create assessments, such as pre- and post-tests in unit studies and State assessments, along with curricula-aligned rubrics. Common assessments are used to determine student progress toward goals across grades and subject areas.

### Impact

Assessments provide actionable feedback to students regarding their achievement, as verified by students, teachers, and school leaders. Teachers adjust curricula and instruction based on assessment results.

### Supporting Evidence

- Teachers, students, and school leaders described actionable feedback guided by assessments, rubrics, and checklists as kind, specific and helpful. Examples include a grade-four math performance task, as kind: “You have an excellent understanding of how to recognize that in a multi-digit number, a digit in the one place represents ten times what it represents in the place to its right.”; specific: “You created a place value chart as a tool to show your understanding to round multi-digit whole numbers to any place.”; and helpful: “Make sure to always check your work, label your work, and circle your answer.” In a grade-three personal narrative writing project, the teacher wrote feedback to the student as, kind: “You made a great effort in writing about your missed plane.”; specific: “Your story has a nice start where you introduced the setting and situation.”; and helpful: “Let’s work on adding more details to your story by describing your character’s feelings. Instead of telling us that the characters are crying and upset, describe how they are acting, saying, or thinking.”
- Teachers use a variety of common assessments across grades and content areas to adjust curriculum and instruction. Reading levels are assessed using Fountas and Pinnell leveled literacy assessments that help guide small group reading instruction across grades. Anticipation guides are used across grades as pre-assessments in math to adjust the sequence and groupings for strategic math instruction. *Math and Number Talks* are used as a form of assessment across grades to target instruction and follow-up. Rubrics, including student-friendly formats and post-assessments, are used to adjust curriculum for future units. Assessments are also refined to measure goals across grades, as in the need to develop a more responsive reading assessment for kindergarten and grade-one. A more specific letter-sound and letter recognition assessment was needed to provide more relevant information, so teachers could adjust curriculum and instruction for early readers. More student-centered activities were developed, enabling students to learn letters more easily and with more confidence.
- Analysis of math pre-assessment unit-one data provides each teacher with a summary of results with strengths, weaknesses, and next steps to adjust instruction in order to support increased student growth in that unit. In a grade-four example, each classroom teacher received next steps based on instructional focus areas to develop students’ skills and practice. Some of the suggestions were similar across the grades, as in providing base-ten blocks as manipulatives for students to represent numbers and having students construct arguments when comparing and ordering multi-digit whole numbers. Some suggestions were unique to each class, as in including charts with vocabulary words and greater than and less than symbols for students to refer to, or read and write multi-digit whole numbers using base-ten numerals, number names, and expanded forms.

## 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 and staff consistently communicate to families the school's expectations that are connected to a path to college and career readiness for students and they offer ongoing feedback. Teacher teams and staff establish a culture for learning that consistently communicates high expectations for all students.

### Impact

Ongoing feedback to families helps them understand student progress toward expectations. Teachers offer students ongoing and detailed feedback and guidance that prepares them for their next level.

### Supporting Evidence

- School leaders and staff consistently communicate expectations through monthly newsletters, parent workshops, guidance services that prepare students for middle school, and through a variety of strategic events and practices to promote parental involvement and education. These include Tuesday parent engagement meetings, parent - teacher conferences, the use of ClassDoJo, a classroom communication app, progress reports, report cards, Parent Association meetings, parent workshops, and September open house curriculum presentations. The various opportunities for information sharing help families understand student progress towards meeting expectations. A College Fair event and College Pride days focus on grade-four to begin communication with parents about the middle school selection and application process. Parents reported that through their partnership with the school and attendance at workshops focused on academic expectations, they observe that their children are better prepared in reading and writing. Parents are also informed about their children's participation in additional support for academic intervention, if needed. Student progress in these programs is also communicated to parents.
- Additional events and practices further engage parents with regular occasions for communication about their children's progress with academic and behavioral expectations. At the beginning of the school year, teachers invited parents to grade-level meetings in order to present grade-level expectations in all content areas. Throughout the year, student work is shared with families through opportunities to view and participate in writing celebrations, authors' and artists' night, and a science fair. Monthly meetings with the principal, called the "2<sup>nd</sup> Cup of Coffee", provide a place and time to share important and timely information with parents and open a two-way conversation regarding parental concerns and to share ideas.
- Students and parents expressed the belief that teachers and staff establish a culture for learning that consistently communicates high expectations and offer ongoing and detailed feedback and guidance that supports and prepare students for their next levels. Activities such as career days, fieldtrips to middle schools, and visits by middle school representatives organized by a coordinator all provide guidance and support. Teachers provide students with success criteria that are in some cases collaboratively developed with students and their teachers. Oral and written feedback is provided to students along with expectations provided by the success criteria. Classes have morning meetings where daily expectations are presented and discussed. Morning schoolwide announcements celebrate classes with 100 percent attendance and/or 100 percent of students wearing school uniforms.

## Additional Finding

<b>Quality Indicator:</b>	<b>4.1 Teacher Support and Supervision</b>	<b>Rating:</b>	<b>Proficient</b>
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### Findings

School leaders support the development of teachers, including those new to the profession, with effective next steps through frequent cycles of classroom observations. An effective system based on teacher observation data is used to realistically design and facilitate professional development (PD) and to make informed decisions that advance career development for teachers and other staff members.

### Impact

Effective feedback from teacher observations elevates schoolwide instructional practices. Professional growth and reflection are promoted by the strategies implemented by school leaders.

### Supporting Evidence

- School leaders described their approach to classroom observation by including learning walks, intervisitations, and Teacher Rounds feedback. Learning walks or walkthroughs are accountability tools used by school leaders and coaches that occur shortly after PD sessions to assess levels of implementation by observing a series of different instructional practices. In addition, intervisitations are scheduled so that pairs of teachers can observe each other teach and share feedback with one another. Informal teacher observations are based on levels of demonstrated experience, with priority placed on teachers who are new to teaching receiving the most support and feedback. Teachers select either a six- or four-cycle schedule of observations. One teacher shared the importance of feedback as being valued since the observation process provides "...another set of eyes" so that a new perspective is provided. During the feedback follow-up after an observation, coaches are invited to sit in on the debrief. Depending on the needs of the teacher, an action plan is developed with a range of supports to be provided.
- All observations are noted in a Google Drive database of all teaching staff, where all supervisors and coaches have access so that teachers' developing skills and supports can be referenced with students' academic results. Results from walkthroughs and intervisitations are also noted so that all feedback is recorded with next steps. Teachers noted that the feedback they receive follows the "kind, specific, and helpful" format that is used with students. An example of this format had "teachers are using iPads to communicate students' progress in real time" as a highlight. Next steps included "...Your plans should indicate an appropriate instructional approach you will implement to clarify the misconception you had identified while designing the lesson. This strategy will move your practice in demonstrating knowledge of content and pedagogy towards highly effective."
- School leaders review the Advance report every two months to look at patterns that can show progress in targeted areas for individual teachers and also provide targeted areas for PD. An example of this occurred when many teachers were scoring as developing in the Danielson *Framework for Teaching* component 3c, engaging students in learning. School leaders and coaches developed PD as a follow-up, and then used walkthroughs to assess the level of implementation and success that resulted from the targeted support. As a result, most of the teachers received effective ratings in the area of 3c on their subsequent observation.