

Quality Review Report

2018-2019

P186X Walter J. Damrosch School

K-12 all grades 75X186

**750 Jennings Street
Bronx
NY 10459**

Principal: Ava Kaplan

**Dates of Review:
January 31, 2019 - February 1, 2019**

Lead Reviewer: Jacqueline King-Robinson

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

P186X Walter J. Damrosch School serves students in grade K through grade 12. 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	Proficient
2.2 Align assessments to curricula, use on-going assessment and grading practices, and analyze information on student learning outcomes to adjust instructional decisions at the team and classroom levels	Additional Finding	Proficient

School Quality Ratings continued

School Culture		
<i>To what extent does the school...</i>	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	Proficient
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		
<i>To what extent does the school...</i>	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	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
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Findings

The school leader consistently communicates high expectations aligned to the Danielson *Framework for Teaching* to the entire staff through weekly emails and a staff handbook. The school leader communicates clear expectations to all families and children new to the school community and provides them with a parent handbook.

Impact

School leaders' effective use of staff orientation and professional development sessions result in the establishment of clear expectations for supporting students in their transition to the Least Restrictive Environment (LRE). Staff members' verbal and written communication with families provides them with consistent updates about their child's progress.

Supporting Evidence

- The school leader conducts registration for all families new to the school. Parent engagement Tuesdays are consistently used to communicate with families about their child's progress. There are informational bulletin boards at all sites that serve as reminders to families about upcoming events and deadlines. As students are being considered for placements in the LRE, staff and school leaders conduct meetings with the families to inform them of the benefits and concerns about changing their child's placement, provide support in visiting the other placements and give guidance to both the family and child during the transition. At the parent meeting a parent described how reluctant she and her husband were to consider placing their child in a less restrictive classroom. After meeting with staff and visiting other sites, the parents explained they became more comfortable with the transition. All parents agreed, that school staff provides the supports and guidance that are needed for their children to succeed in a less restrictive learning environment.
- Minutes from staff meetings include the expectations for classroom environment, instructional practices, and those for student supervision. School leaders identify professional development opportunities that are aligned to the Danielson *Framework for Teaching* and encourage staff to attend. There is a Peer Collaborative Teacher (PCT) and model teachers that support their colleagues in meeting schoolwide instructional expectations. A culture of mutual accountability exists amongst staff. For example, staff members plan units for the Word Generation program with each teacher responsible for planning and preparing all materials for one unit and sharing it with the team. The open door policy of the school leader allows staff to articulate concerns or to request support they may need to achieve the schoolwide goals.
- All families are provided a parent handbook that clearly articulates school policies, and promotes parent involvement. The handbook provides the school calendar, information about the Individual Education Plan parent's rights, community resources, and services that are available to families. A monthly newsletter and monthly in-school training for parents is provided by the parent coordinator. Parents agreed that there is strong support from the school staff and that they are consistently given ideas that they can use to help their child at home. One parent stated, "The physical therapist called me at home to express my child's progress. He gave me ideas to support her in the house and as a result she is getting better with her mobility around the house."

Area of Focus

Quality Indicator:	1.2 Pedagogy	Rating:	Proficient
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Findings

Across classrooms, teaching strategies reflect a schoolwide belief that children learn best through the development of students' academic vocabulary and providing students with Specifically Designed Instruction (SDI). Teachers routinely provide students with discussion prompts using the Preferred Mode of Communication (PMC) to engage in discussions with their peers and staff.

Impact

Through the use of teaching practices aligned to the Danielson *Framework for Teaching*, students are supported in completing work products and engaging in discussions that reflect high levels of student participation. As yet, student ownership of learning was not observed across the vast majority of classrooms.

Supporting Evidence

- Across classrooms, teaching practices align to the schoolwide goal of developing students' ability to communicate their thinking using academic content vocabulary. Teachers routinely provide students with opportunities to communicate their thinking to their classmates. During a visit to a kindergarten through second grade self-contained classroom, a student was observed leading the morning meeting, while other students responded to the questions posed by their peer. Students were provided with sentence starters to support their engagement in student-to-student discourse. When discussing that there were eleven more days before reaching the hundredth day of school, one student stated, "When we have ten ones we move them here. That is regrouping." Across classrooms, student discussions consistently reflect high levels of participation. However, this level of student ownership was not consistently observed across the vast majority of classrooms.
- During a visit to a seventh grade self-contained classroom, students were observed responding to prompts in complete sentences using the word of the day. The teacher modeled the use of annotation symbols on a short essay. Subsequently the students were asked to use the symbols to annotate a nonfiction article addressing the death penalty in the United States. They were asked to consider whether or not the death penalty was justified and support their response with evidence from the article. Across classrooms, teachers provide students with opportunities to read a balance of informational and literary texts, become knowledgeable about the world through the reading material selected, use evidence from a text to support a claim and develop vocabulary needed to access complex texts. Although teaching practices incorporate the instructional shifts, as yet students have limited opportunity to take ownership of their learning.
- Teachers consistently model expectations for student participation in independent and small group work. During a visit to a second through fourth grade math class the teacher was observed modeling what was expected during independent work time. Students had access to a variety of tools that supported them in demonstrating their thinking, which promoted high levels of student engagement and aligned to providing students with SDI. However, during a visit to a middle school math class, students were engaged in playing fraction math games that did not lead to student ownership of their learning. Students relied heavily on teacher support and feedback after each trial while playing the game.

Additional Finding

Quality Indicator:	1.1 Curriculum	Rating:	Proficient
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Findings

School leaders and faculty have aligned the curricula to the Common Core Learning Standards Dynamic Learning Maps, integrated the instructional shifts, and include specially designed instruction for students with learning differences and ELLs. Curricula and academic tasks are planned and refined using student assessment data.

Impact

Unit lesson plans and tasks are planned, tiered, and adjusted to include differentiated strategies for ELLs and students with learning differences. Adopted curricula provide coherence across grades and subjects.

Supporting Evidence

- Lesson plans across grades, subjects and varied student populations indicate a range of collaboratively planned adjustments to make the curricula accessible for individuals and groups of students. A fifth grade ELA plan referenced alignment to the Common Core Learning Standards and English as a New Language standards. Student groupings based on student work and assessment data were included. Unit plans used across the grades, identify differentiated activities at three tiered levels of intervention: below level, on level and above level. Specific curricula pages, additional online resources, and scaffolding strategies are offered for each tier and include supports for students with disabilities and ELLs. The review of an ELA lesson plan indicated that those students below level would use picture symbols to answer literal questions; students on level would use text and pictures from three choices to answer literal questions and above level students would answer inferential questions using text only, thus providing access for all students.
- The instructional shifts are included throughout all curricula documents reviewed. Across the content areas, units require students to read and annotate nonfiction texts in order to make a claim and cite textual evidence to support their claims. A Word Generation unit requires students to read and annotate an article entitled, *Is the Death Penalty Justified?* The tasks required them to develop a claim about whether people who commit serious crimes be sentenced to death and support it with evidence from the text. Academic content vocabulary is embedded at the beginning of each unit. There is an instructional focus on developing student academic content vocabulary as evidenced by Word Generation unit plans. Vocabulary words from the aforementioned unit included advocate, contrary, prohibit, releases and reverse. Word Generation curricula build coherence and next level readiness.
- Adjustments to the curricula result in providing all students, including ELLs and students with disabilities, the necessary support needed to have access and ensure their ability to become cognitively engaged. Plans have been revised to include specific strategies for individual students across content areas. A math lesson plan identified how students will respond using their Preferred Mode of Communication (PMC) to determine the set of items that is greater when given different quantities. Results from the Student Annual Needs Determination Inventory (SANDI) are used to develop student groupings for the SANDI math block based on individual student needs. Across grades and content areas, lesson plans include ways in which to differentiate the presentation of content material, the process students will use to engage in the learning and the final expected products each student will produce. Lesson plans include adjustments for individuals and groups of students based on formative and summative assessment data. An early childhood ELA plan included how students will respond based on their PMC. Some students will use pictures and symbols, a different group will use text, and pictures and the other group will answer inferential and literal questions thus ensuring that differentiated instruction took place allowing all students to be actively engaged.

Additional Finding

Quality Indicator:	2.2 Assessment	Rating:	Proficient
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Findings

Teachers utilize common assessments, such as the SANDI assessments, to measure student progress towards achieving Individualized Education Program (IEP) goals. Teachers' assessment practices reflect the use of student self-assessment and checks for understanding.

Impact

Teachers' use of data from common assessments results in the development of individual student goals. The data informs student reading groups and adjustments to the curricula resulting in meeting all students' learning needs.

Supporting Evidence

- Self-assessment tools include the use of pictures and symbols to communicate feedback to students. A self-assessment rubric that is used for all subjects and grades includes pictures and words that describe student performance at each of four levels. Paraprofessionals capture data that identifies the prompt level, amount of adult support provided and completed work products as students complete independent and small group work. After analyzing the data from a SANDI assessments teachers make adjustments to student grouping for the SANDI math block and provide targeted instruction using differentiated curricula to meet individual student learning needs.
- School leaders have established a schoolwide assessment timeline for the administration of common assessments. This includes administration of beginning of the year assessments, the results of which are used to refine student class compositions. Additionally, the data collected results in the development of effective groupings that are designed to ensure that students with disabilities and ENLLs receive the mandated support as determined by IEPs and individual English proficiency levels. Furthermore, related services are provided in class whenever possible to support all students' learning needs.
- Staff assesses students using Fountas and Pinnell (F&P) assessments three times per year. The results are used to form strategic reading groups designed to provide students with reading instruction at their functional levels. Planned learning groups receive targeted interventions through book clubs, word study, debate, research based reading programs and access to leveled reading resources. Analyzing student assessment data results in effective groupings that promote progress towards goals for groups of students, as evidenced by improved reading results from the beginning of the year and mid-year F&P data.

Additional Finding

Quality Indicator:	4.1 Teacher Support and Supervision	Rating:	Proficient
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Findings

School leaders promote the development of teachers through frequent cycles of formal and informal observations. The professional development (PD) plan is informed by results from a survey administered by school leaders, teacher observation data and feedback from the teachers in leadership positions.

Impact

Schoolwide intervisitations and professional learning structures provide effective feedback to teachers that foster their professional development.

Supporting Evidence

- School leaders conduct frequent cycles of observations based on individual teacher needs and provide feedback. Feedback is based on the observation, student work and assessment data. Expectations for teacher practice are clearly articulated. Feedback to one teacher stated, “During our post-observation meeting we discussed the need for less teacher directed, single path of inquiry instruction, and more differentiation.” Feedback to another teacher included, “Create a lesson rubric available for students to self-assess and encourage students to turn and talk with each other during the learning task.” Observation reports reveal that teachers are encouraged to collaborate, in order to increase teachers’ instructional capacity, and support one another as they develop.
- School leaders and teacher peers support the development of teachers by modeling, and leading teachers through intervisitations and discussions surfacing from professional articles and books that they read. All of these activities are aligned with the schoolwide instructional focus of increasing academic content vocabulary and ensuring that students are placed in the LRE. Additionally, new teachers attend new teacher orientation and are assigned a mentor. Mentors provide new teachers with ten hours of mentorship throughout the school year. Teachers explained that these professional collaborations are resulting in increased instructional capacity. Advance data reveals that teachers are improving in the domains from the Danielson *Framework for Teaching* that measure using questioning, discussion techniques, and engaging students in learning.
- Schoolwide professional development is informed by teacher observation data, student work and assessment data, as well as results from a PD survey that is administered at the start of the school year. Staff completes a post-learning survey at the end of each PD session that is designed to measure its effectiveness. Results from the survey are used to make adjustments to future sessions. School leaders develop succession plans for staff members to ensure that staff is developed to fill key roles within the school and district. Five teachers have been identified as site coordinators, three paraprofessionals have become certified classroom teachers, six teachers have become district level coaches, and six teachers have become school administrators. This gives evidence of the positive impact of the system being employed regarding assignment of staff.

Additional Finding

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

Teacher teams use a variety of protocols to facilitate inquiry work and complete intervisitation forms after participating in peer-to-peer observations. The Middle School Quality Initiative (MSQI) team utilizes the ATLAS protocol to analyze student work to determine impact that interventions are having on student achievement.

Impact

Teacher team inquiry meetings strengthen and improve the instructional practices of teachers and help groups of students make progress towards meeting their individual student goals.

Supporting Evidence

- Teachers engage in protocol-based collaborative analysis of student work products through Professional Learning Communities (PLCs). PLCs meet bi-monthly and engage in curriculum and pedagogically based professional learning using the ATLAS protocol. PLCs ensure students are participating in rigorous instruction through the use of a schoolwide rigor meter. PLCs request curriculum refinement by submitting an evidence-based curriculum modification form that is reviewed by the curriculum team and school leaders prior to any modifications. The majority of the teaching staff, actually 94 percent, agreed that they modify curricula materials to meet the learning needs of all students. Teachers have a voice in decisions that affect student learning across the school.
- The main focus of the MSQI team meeting was the role of vocabulary knowledge in reading comprehension. The team facilitator provided teachers with a research-based article that explored the benefits of deepening students' vocabulary knowledge. Subsequently, teachers used the ATLAS protocol to look at student work to determine if their instructional strategies were increasing student use of the *Generation Ready* vocabulary words. Teachers completed the recording sheet to record the implications for instruction. Although student work revealed that students' use of the vocabulary words was increasing, it was noted that students still struggled with sentence structure and punctuation. Next steps included providing students with sentence frames, paragraph organizers, and graphic organizers. Additionally, the team reviewed student assessment data to determine if the instructional strategies that they were using were resulting in increased reading levels for students receiving interventions. Assessment data revealed that on average most students' reading ability increased one reading level.
- There is a Principal Advisory Council that consists of teachers and paraprofessionals who participate in decision making across the school. There are model, mentor and peer collaborative teachers that provide feedback to school leaders that inform PD. A college and career readiness teacher determines if various programs are a good fit for the school community. Structures exist to provide support to the college and career readiness teacher in establishing a committee that is responsible for developing a college for all culture throughout the school. The committee plans college trips, college day, workshops for staff and families and manages vendors that provide resources for students and their families. Schoolwide structures enable teachers to play a role in key decisions that impact student learning.