Quality Review Report

2018-2019

P.S. 032 The Gifford School

Elementary 31R032

232 Barlow Avenue
Staten Island
NY 10308

Principal: Nancy Spatarobellocch

Dates of Review:
October 23, 2018 - October 24, 2018

Lead Reviewer: Buffie Whitfield

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. 032 The Gifford School 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		
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	**Area of Focus**	**Developing**
1.2 Develop teacher pedagogy from a coherent set of beliefs about how students learn best that is informed by the instructional shifts and Danielson Framework for Teaching, aligned to the curricula, engaging, and meets the needs of all learners so that all students produce meaningful work products	**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	**Additional Finding**	**Proficient**

School Quality Ratings continued

School Culture

To what extent does the school...	Area	Rating
1.4 Maintain a culture of mutual trust and positive attitudes that supports the academic and personal growth of students and adults	**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**	**Proficient**
3.1 Establish a coherent vision of school improvement that is reflected in a short list of focused, data-based goals that are tracked for progress and are understood and supported by the entire school community	**Additional Finding**	**Proficient**
4.1 Observe teachers using the Danielson Framework for Teaching along with the analysis of learning outcomes to elevate school-wide instructional practices and implement strategies that promote professional growth and reflection	**Additional Finding**	**Proficient**
4.2 Engage in structured professional collaborations on teams using an inquiry approach that promotes shared leadership and focuses on improved student learning	**Additional Finding**	**Proficient**
5.1 Evaluate the quality of school- level decisions, making adjustments as needed to increase the coherence of policies and practices across the school, with particular attention to the CCLS	**Additional Finding**	**Proficient**

Quality Indicator:	3.4 High Expectations	Rating:	Well Developed

Findings

School leaders and staff consistently communicate expectations related to high levels of shared accountability for staff and student learning across the school community. Via Class Dojo and progress reports, all staff members communicate and partner with families.

Impact

High expectations are effectively communicated and supported resulting in strong partnerships among staff and families. A culture of shared accountability for improving achievement is clearly established

- The administration provides consistent communication of high expectations to all staff through several measures including a staff handbook, weekly school newsletter, bulletins, and differentiated professional development. School leaders support the staff's implementation of these expectations through consistent cycles of observations. Staff is provided actionable feedback, which is used to inform professional development sessions. Teachers reported that they all receive ongoing professional development from school-based staff and consultants, participate in intervisitations with peers and attend citywide professional development events that help them develop expertise in meeting all instructional expectations.

- Teachers stated that they consistently communicate to families their children's progress relative to these expectations. Communications include phone calls, emails, texts, backpack letters, grade-team newsletters, and notifications through Class Dojo, an online system for communicating grades, assignments, and information. Parents receive progress reports that share their children's performance, progress and goals in literacy, math and physical education. The families expressed appreciation for the many layers of communication which school staff members provide, via the school's website, social media, text messages, school messenger calls, newsletters, event calendars and emails. Utilizing progress reports that are sent home and online data portals, all staff members partner with families in accelerating students' progress towards their high school and college readiness goals.

- Parents shared they are able to contact teachers directly through Class Dojo, and have received direct responses that have supported their children in completing homework or projects, or were provided additional supportive assignments. Parents explained that they partner with the staff as they work together to support their children's academic growth. For example, parents shared that teachers often communicate through emails and Class Dojo informing them of their children's success or need for support. One parent stated that this home-school partnership allows parents to collaboratively support their children in meeting the school's high expectations.

Quality Indicator:	**1.1 Curriculum**	**Rating:**	**Developing**

Findings

Academic tasks reflect the process of planning including customizing protocols connected to the Teacher's College Reading and Writing program to provide students' access. However, curricula and tasks inconsistently emphasize rigorous habits and higher-order skills across grades and subjects.

Impact

Consistent access to rigorous curricula that cognitively engage all students, including English Language Learners (ELLs) and students with disabilities, is uneven which results in missed opportunities for all students to demonstrate their learning through active cognitive engagement.

Supporting Evidence

- School leaders are developing curricula that focus on building reading stamina through the use of complex texts and establishing protocols for discussions and writing. Through the incorporation of various Common Core based programs teachers are developing rigorous learning tasks. An English Language Arts (ELA) task requires students to use shared inquiry to prove connections between characters based on their traits. The lesson plans contain questions requiring students to compare and prove their response using text-based evidence. However, the specificity of scaffolded questions is not found in some lesson plans. Teachers shared they are customizing the Teacher College Reading and Writing protocols for ELA. This is also being done with math problem-solving protocols, such as study the problem, outline the options, limit and apply the solution, verify the solution and explain the results (SOLVE).

- A review of ELA lesson plans indicated some modifications and revisions to address classroom learners' needs, especially students with disabilities. For example, an ELA plan included scaffolds for struggling students to support their being able to answer the essential questions. A math plan indicated the manipulatives for students to use while problem solving. However, extensions are not yet evident across all classes. Specifically, many plans reflected little evidence of addressing varying student abilities in the design of academic tasks. Furthermore, most plans lacked a clear rationale for grouping students and connecting specific adjusted tasks based on ability level from formative and summative data. Overall, the use of data based planning in lesson plans was not in evidence. The principal stated that the school is in the process of reviewing, modifying, and revising the curriculum to strengthen access for all learners and student engagement in rigorous tasks.

- During the meeting, students expressed specific unit tasks in primarily English Language Arts and shared that they would like to have this type of task in social studies and science as well. To that end, school leaders and teachers are developing content area curriculum maps in literacy, science, social studies and math. In addition they are developing reciprocal teaching units in social studies and science, debate protocols. This they believe will result in increased coherency across content areas and extend the integration of higher-order thinking skills across all subjects through addressing a common essential question.

Quality Indicator:	1.2 Pedagogy	Rating:	Proficient

Findings

Across classrooms, teaching practices are aligned to the curricula. There is a focus on providing multiple entry points into the content for all learners.

Impact

Across classrooms, students engage in appropriately challenging tasks. Work products give evidence to all learners using higher-order thinking skills.

Supporting Evidence

- Across classes, paraprofessionals worked in concert with teachers to impact student learning. Students worked one on one with paraprofessionals as the teacher rotated to each child. In many classrooms, there was evidence of process charts and visual supports for students to promote their independent learning. Some teachers used learning charts as an interactive tool and used how students utilize them as the basis when developing purposeful learning groups. In the majority of classrooms, teachers used group work to engage students in tasks. Student access was ensured via differentiated tasks for groups of students according to need. The use of conversation prompts, and a variety of manipulatives were in evidence and available to students to use. This practice of providing multiple entry points was present in most of the classes visited.

- Across most classrooms, students were required to provide evidence for their claims and to be able to explain their answers. The Socratic seminar protocol was in evidence across ELA classrooms. Students actively engaged in addressing a topic or text where an inner ring of students discussed a topic while an outer ring of students closely observed and assessed the discussion. In a grade four class, students made connections between characters through their traits. Observed student interactions reflected high levels of student thinking and participation with special attention focused on building each other's contributions.

- In a fourth grade math class, students were solving word problems, working in groups to understand the problem, think of a plan and solve the problem. Students engaged in multi-step problem solving and demonstrated the ability to use accountable talk in their interactions, in most cases leading to facilitating their own learning. However, in a few classrooms this level of student interaction is not yet fully implemented. In most classes, teachers facilitated the learning process and allowed students to take ownership of their discussions and choose the strategies that worked best for them. Yet, in a few classrooms a teacher-led approach prevented some students from having the opportunity to participate fully in class discussions.

Additional Finding

Quality Indicator:	2.2 Assessment	Rating:	Proficient

Findings

Assessment practices are aligned to the school's curricula and specific success criteria. Ongoing checks are used to assess understanding.

Impact

Assessment data provides teachers with feedback on students' performance across most subject areas. Most teachers address immediate needs of individuals or groups of students to accelerate their learning.

Supporting Evidence

- In most classrooms visited, formative assessment practices were seen in daily lessons via questioning, sharing of ideas from a group or partner work providing for immediate feedback on student mastery of content and skills. In most classes, students knew their success criteria. During a meeting, a student explained how she was assessed on her ability to create a beginning for her personal narrative. Across classrooms, teachers were doing check-ins and created small learning groups focusing on specific skills. Teachers use benchmark data to determine student groupings and differentiation needs.

- Checks for understanding were observed in classrooms where teachers circulated to ascertain the learning and surface any misconceptions. For example, in an ELA class a teacher said, "Show me what you are going to do next." In another class, the teacher asked, "How do you know? Turn and share with your partners" and then listened to the student responses. A few teachers were observed using a checklist to track student learning. Some students used their success criteria to assess their learning resulting in their having a greater understanding of the material.

- Teachers adopt and create Common Core-aligned rubrics, checklists and a school-wide grading policy, aligned to the curricula, to provide feedback to students on their performance. Bulletin board displays of student work illustrate use of narrative writing rubrics to evaluate progress in student writing across grades. Most classroom bulletin boards contained student work with rubric-based feedback to students in ELA. Comments from teachers include next steps for the students to implement to improve their work. On one work sample the teacher urged a student to, "use your organizer to further develop the plot." The students interviewed were able to clearly specify what they needed to do to improve their work in ELA based on the feedback noted on the work that they displayed.

Additional Finding

Quality Indicator:	4.1 Teacher Support and Supervision	Rating:	Proficient

Findings

School leaders support the development of teachers with constructive feedback and appropriate next steps by analyzing student work. There is an effective system in place that utilizes teacher observation data to formulate professional learning experiences aligned to the school's literacy goals and informs planning for leadership succession.

Impact

The schoolwide observation and professional learning structures, along with the leader's effective decision-making, foster teachers 'professional growth in literacy practices and improvements in instruction.

Supporting Evidence

- School leaders conduct informal observation cycles based on specific components in the Danielson *Framework for Teaching* as they relate to the school's goals. These cycles also address the instructional focus which centers on providing a coherent curriculum that reflects the Common Core Learning Standards and promotes college and career readiness for all learners, including English Language Learners (ELLs) and students with disabilities. To improve the quality of the school culture many initiatives were implemented to help increase academic rigor. Collectively, the leadership team provides feedback to teachers to support their teaching practices. A feedback report referred to a teacher needing to use higher order thinking questions to strengthen the rigor in the lesson. Another feedback report addressed the importance of ensuring this particular feedback structure was in place. During the meeting, a teacher stated that because she received specific feedback she was able to incorporate self and peer assessment in her class more efficiently.

- The Professional Development Committee meets to review teacher input and data in order to develop a training plan for all teachers. At the time of the review teachers' professional development session directly related to implementing the SOLVE method for problem solving in mathematics. In addition, based on the school's performance in math, the math consultant conducts lab site work and trains around the SOLVE method. A review of feedback reflects implementation of improved practices across the school.

- School leaders provide actionable feedback and next steps. Teachers state that they receive support from peers through intervisitations and collegial planning. As a result, all teachers are provided with valuable and actionable feedback that captures next steps to support development of effective teaching methods. These consistent feedback practices result in supporting opportunities for improved pedagogy leading to improved student learning

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

Findings

Teachers engage in structured, inquiry-based professional collaborations where student work is analyzed and assessed.

Impact

Via distributive leadership, teacher capacity is furthered as a result of team collaborations and through the adoption of a coherent common instructional language, which positively impacts teacher practice.

Supporting Evidence

- All teachers are involved in inquiry-based professional collaborations. Conversations with teachers and teacher teams indicate a shared understanding of schoolwide plans and a common instructional language that is being developed through their sharing practices. For example, a teacher explained how she learned to utilize different scaffolds for differentiating her lessons. Another teacher explained that she uses the strategy of stretching out words to support students' reading in early childhood. Additionally, teachers discussed trends of weakness in their classes. Some examples provided related to the comprehension of keywords such as round-trip and understanding multi-step problems. Teachers shared strategies to improve areas of weakness, such as drawing a picture or developing a model to show distance in math. The infusion of strategies provides students with a toolkit of practices to support their learning. Teachers attest that students utilize strategies in their classes, which have helped them with understanding.

- Teacher teams meet regularly to align instructional practice within and across grades. Teachers stated that communication is continually taking place as a result of the teacher team learning culture. They enjoy working together and sharing information. They believe that one of the most effective forms of professional development is visiting classrooms with a specific purpose such as looking at characteristics of the learning environments and to observe colleagues. Teachers regularly visit classes independently. One teacher said, "I can learn from my colleagues during team meetings and intervisitations." Another teacher stated, "We have learned so much about reading and writing through sharing information and strategies across grades and meetings." According to *Advance,* 70 percent of teachers are rated effective and 29 percent of teachers are rated highly effective.

- School leaders and teachers reported that teacher teams and individual teachers play key roles in instructional and program decisions. Their input was used in developing the Response to Intervention program. Teachers use their classrooms as site labs and they offer workshops for parents addressing how to help their child with the Common Core learnings so they will be prepared for New York State exams. Lead teachers facilitate the work of the collaborative teacher teams. After they visit other schools or attend district professional development sessions, these teachers turnkey the learnings and information to their peers to enhance the work of their teams. This practice results in improved instruction and positive learning outcomes.