

Quality Review Report

2017-2018

P.S. Q256

K-12 all grades 75Q256

**525 Convent Road
Queens
NY 11791**

Principal: Robert Lopez

**Dates of Review:
March 22, 2018 - March 23, 2018**

Lead Reviewer: AJ Hepworth

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. Q256 serves students in grade PK 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	Area of Focus	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	Additional Finding	Well Developed

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	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	Additional Finding	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	Area of Celebration	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	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	Well Developed
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:	1.3 Leveraging Resources	Rating:	Well Developed
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Findings

The assignment of staff and use of technology is well aligned to support the schoolwide instructional goals and long-range action plans. Additionally, Professional Learning Communities work to meet student needs and the staff's professional responsibilities.

Impact

Practices connected to resources and staff professional time lead to meaningful work products for all students.

Supporting Evidence

- Appointment of a behavioral specialist has ensured tracking and monitoring systems are strategically aligned and supported to meet the various needs of all students and support instructional goals. Information collected, analyzed, and disseminated amongst relevant stakeholders ensures that students receive their appropriate services and provided the least restrictive environment. For example, students who have demonstrated progress and an ability to independently meet personal and academic expectations no longer have an assigned paraprofessional. Additionally, Functional Behavioral Assessment data is shared and used to inform onsite professional development and Positive Behavioral Intervention and Support (PBIS) strategies in behavioral intervention plans. Students' Individualized Education Plans (IEPs) indicate they are in compliance with state mandates. All IEPs are effectively documented and communicated to staff via the behavioral specialist. Trends identified to improve instructional needs of students are incorporated into staff professional development topics. Sessions addressed areas such as understanding how to effectively use restorative circles and visual supports to improve the learning environment.
- Provision of communication devices for students to meaningfully engage in their learning have led to increased alignment with student needs and curricular experiences. Local government council members and grant funds have provided the financial support for acquisition of adapted keyboards, voice-output devices, and tablet devices ensuring students engage appropriately with their teachers. Students are now able to express their needs because of the acquired communication devices. Parents overwhelmingly appreciate the organizations' decision to support their child's development with these devices. They explained that the devices have "set us up for success" at home so we can better communicate with our child.
- During weekly Professional Learning Community (PLC) meetings, staff meets to plan and revise curricula to improve instruction as well as to meet the diverse needs of the various students across six sites. The majority of students go to school all year round because of their personal needs. During the PLC meetings, staff discusses students' individualized goals and IEP needs, identifying what is or is not effective to guide reteaching, grouping, and the progression towards mastery of skills specific to each student. The onsite unit coordinator supports the staff in enabling the students to achieve their goals by providing effective structures and appropriate resources. Resources include paraprofessionals, manipulatives, flexible program scheduling, and appropriate physical space.

Area of Focus

Quality Indicator:	1.1 Curriculum	Rating:	Proficient
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Findings

School leaders and staff ensure lesson plans and student tasks are aligned to the Common Core Learning Standards and integrate the instructional shifts, emphasizing rigorous habits, higher-order thinking skills, and life skills across grades and content areas.

Impact

Coherence and promotion of college and career readiness and life skills are integrated throughout instructional planning documents resulting in all students having opportunities to build the skills essential for their learning. However, as of yet, the instructional shifts addressing the staircase of complexity and academic vocabulary are not evident in all planned lessons limiting the level of rigor for all students.

Supporting Evidence

- Lesson plans reflect curricula aligned to the Common Core Learning Standards and instructional shifts. Across curricular planning documents, teachers purposefully make decisions that address career and life skills for the needs of many alternatively assessed students. An English Language Arts (ELA) lesson plan in career study tasked students to demonstrate their understanding of careers and community by completing mock job applications and identifying appropriate attire for a job interview. Similarly, students with disabilities in an alternatively assessed one-to-one class identify money, sums of money, and determine if they have enough money to make situational purchases. However, appropriately challenging integration of the instructional shifts, specifically, staircase of complexity and use of academic vocabulary were not strategically incorporated in all lesson plans.
- Students with disabilities comprise about ninety percent of all learners enrolled in the school. Teachers plan their lessons to specifically include scaffolds and structures that meet their needs. Provision of manipulatives, visual and auditory supports, and differentiated tasks are consistently integrated for the diversity of students. An objective for a writing class states that students will be able to group related information together. The lesson plan identifies four different student learning groups based on their reading level, attention, and behavior. Similarly, a middle level plan addressing student understanding of the value of a dime includes group work, one-on-one work with the teacher or paraprofessional, and independent practice workstations. The alignment of the groups and stations target IEP goals for each student. Although other lesson plans may have provided rigorous experiences for a variety of students, how those tasks will support the students' IEP goals at the end of the lesson was not as clear.
- Curricular planning documents include graphic organizers and scaffolds for most students to help them demonstrate their thinking. For example, a lesson plan designed to engage students in having an understanding of story elements, specifically setting, and character role, included three differentiated graphic organizers to help students identify and sequence the events from the story which they read as a whole group. The graphic organizers supported some student's ability to read, while others were provided text-supported images. High quality graphic organizers were not as coherently embedded across all classes where they could have benefitted students. For example, a science lesson challenged students to predict and record the volume of a variety of common objects. However, the data table's design limited students' ability to have additional support in demonstrating how they will measure the volume and calculate their answer.

Additional Finding

Quality Indicator:	1.2 Pedagogy	Rating:	Proficient
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Findings

Teaching practices align with the instructional foci regarding how students learn best in the least restrictive environment, while providing consistent multiple entry points to support their learning via graphic organizers, manipulatives, and communication devices.

Impact

Students engage in appropriate tasks that promote college, career, and life skills that yield meaningful work products.

Supporting Evidence

- Instruction supports students' engagement in learning through coherently designed lessons. For example, students in a six-to-one-to-one class went to a variety of math workstations to demonstrate their understanding of money. Students were encouraged to work independently and solve the task in front of them. Some used real coins, pretend coins, calculators, or communication devices. All students remained engaged when completing their work at the respective station. When one student finished his work, he understood that he was to continue his learning at a reading station. Similarly, in a high school social studies class, students engaged in a discussion about how Eastern Europe was involved in the Cold War. Students made several analogies to help others develop a clear understanding and make connections using a self-selected graphic organizer to represent their conceptual understanding. The various graphic organizers students could choose from included organizers for sequencing, cause and effect, glossary, main idea and details, making inferences, and compare and contrast. Students had to justify their graphic organizer selection while completing the task, and how it aligned with their understanding of the topic.
- Teaching strategies align with engaging students in challenging tasks, which is the instructional focus for this school year. A student with disabilities, who had limited motor function and was confined to a wheelchair in a one-to-one class, developed his sensory and motor skills touching water beads and Kinetic sand in different containers that had hidden cubes in them. Concurrently, other students placed visual images of content vocabulary (i.e. big/small, tall/short, etc.) on a laminated board with Velcro to demonstrate their understanding of measurement. Furthermore, other students read an adaptive book using a communication device to practice their vocabulary words. All students were able to remain engaged in appropriately challenging tasks due to supportive and attentive staff.
- Students demonstrate their higher-order thinking using a variety of resources. Elementary age students learning about famous women in history charted text evidence while making connections to the life of Helen Keller. They used large sentence strips to group and organize information and display it on chart paper. Although some planning adjustments may have allowed the students to better organize and display their thinking during the activity, they clearly demonstrated an understanding of organization and developed logical arguments for completing the task. Similarly, in an activity focused on the identification of elements within a short story, students made connections using visual pictures and three-dimensional aides. Students capable of reading verbally read aloud to their classmates with teacher support. Furthermore, all students answered questions, some with help from their paraprofessional or communication device. All students were able to recognize the beginning, middle, and end of the story while identifying cause and effect between the characters, thus demonstrating their thinking and producing meaningful work.

Additional Finding

Quality Indicator:	2.2 Assessment	Rating:	Well Developed
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Findings

There is a school wide emphasis for both teachers and students to utilize teacher-generated rubrics and checklists aligned to the schools' curricula, thus offering a clear portrait of student mastery. Additionally, teachers consistently monitor student understanding during instruction through questioning and other varied forms of ongoing assessment.

Impact

Students and teachers receive meaningful and actionable feedback regarding student achievement. Teachers make effective adjustments to instruction ensuring that all students' learning needs are met.

Supporting Evidence

- Teachers consistently provide clear feedback to students regarding their progress towards mastery on their work and assessments. Typed feedback in the form of glows and grows is attached to completed assignments, along with a student friendly checklist to ensure all required elements have been satisfied. Furthermore, students who are able to sign off on their work, do so to confirm they understand the feedback regarding their achievement. Similarly, Common Core Learning Standards aligned rubrics are provided with most assignments. Both student and teacher complete the rubric to determine if students' understanding of curricular expectations is in alignment with teacher assessment. On science lab reports, a rubric checklist is attached for students to evaluate their own work and provide teachers information on their achievement. If the difference between the students' assessment and teacher assessment is more than three points, additional points are deducted from the lab report grade, emphasizing the importance of normed assessment and grading policies.
- Teacher generated checklists address the major parts of each task with an emphasis on the instructional shifts. Students refer to their checklists and rubrics to determine if they have successfully included sufficient support with their work and completed assignments. Assessment practices supported by checklists and rubrics allow teachers and students to fully understand their achievement and progress. Additionally, individualized portfolio binders are maintained for all students with samples of students' work that demonstrates baseline information and a sample of mastery of the targeted skill or learning objective. Furthermore, pre- and post-assessment data of students' mastery is represented in data or as a work sample.
- Teachers' checks for understanding and the questions asked between students required critical thinking and ensured students were aware of their next learning steps. For example, when students had to demonstrate their understanding of measuring volume, several students used the equipment incorrectly. The teacher paused instruction and modeled for the students to correct their procedural steps. Similarly, in a grade three through five ELA class, the teacher assessed the students' understanding with a thumbs up or down. Two students who showed thumbs down were pulled aside and provided adjusted instruction with clearer directions and more questions to ensure they could move on with the task successfully. The students were able to demonstrate how they would proceed. The attention teachers provided to their students' academic needs throughout classes contributed significantly to their learning and achievement.

Additional Finding

Quality Indicator:	3.4 High Expectations	Rating:	Well Developed
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Findings

School leaders consistently communicate to all staff high expectations that are aligned to their school motto and student engagement. Faculty has established a culture for learning that systematically communicates a belief and vision of high expectations related to college and career preparedness for all students.

Impact

Teachers are trained and hold themselves accountable for strategies that embed high expectations across grades and subject areas. Students monitor their educational experience using portfolios and are prepared for the next level due to their receiving clear guidance and supports.

Supporting Evidence

- School leadership holds staff accountable to ensure students learn best through active engagement related to their cognitive, emotional, and behavioral development. All teachers and related service providers support this common vision as lifelong learners themselves. They also hold themselves mutually accountable for all students' success as evident in their self-generated school motto, "Kids First, High Expectations, No Excuses."
- Through appropriate ongoing training throughout the year school leadership supports teacher instructional growth plans and professional growth plans. For example, staff that work with non-verbal students receive training on recently acquired communicative devices. Content specialists are provided training on differentiation that has led to providing more student choice on activities as well as the use of manipulatives and graphic organizers. An art teacher has expanded her practice to be more hands-on and allow for movement during lessons based on collaborations with colleagues. Teachers from the various school sites also collaborate on identifying best practices for students and communicate with each other to increase coherence in curriculum, instruction, and assessment via an online platform.
- Students have clear ownership of their educational journey and are able to articulate an understanding of how staff defines those expectations. Several students expressed that teachers ensure all students receive the organizational skills necessary to meet high expectations and focus on their education to prepare them for college and career. Students with disabilities are taught purposeful life and career skills to support their guidance and advisement towards owning their educational next steps. This is true across all grades. For example, elementary age students are taught assembly skills that support employment while high school students conduct mock work interviews.
- Students maintain portfolios, which systematically communicate their growth and progress over time while building upon their previously completed work. Students use their portfolio work samples to establish goals they revisit several times a year and assess their preparation for the next level of their learning.

Additional Finding

Quality Indicator:	4.2 Teacher Teams and Leadership Development	Rating:	Well Developed
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Findings

The teachers are engaged in inquiry-based collaborations that systematically analyze key elements of their work, including classroom practice, assessment data, and student work. Additionally, distributed leadership structures exist across the six school sites.

Impact

School-wide instructional coherence and improved teacher instructional capacity have led to increased student achievement. Additionally, teachers play an integral role in creating mentor programs and behavioral initiatives that contribute positively to student learning across the school.

Supporting Evidence

- Teachers improve their pedagogy while promoting school-wide coherence during weekly efficient and effective inquiry meetings. Individualized student trackers demonstrate increased student achievement from teachers' inquiry work. For example, identification of misconceptions in the understanding of multiple-choice questions for algebraic functions has led to an increase in the number of students taking the regents exam as well as increases in passing rates. During inquiry time, staff reviews student work samples and behavioral matrices connected to their learning goals and academic achievement. The staff discusses modifications to cross-curricular graphic organizers, increasing visual supports, and the use of manipulatives, to strengthen their instructional capacity across classes. Inquiry focused documents highlight students abilities to promote their ownership of learning and independence. For example, a student in an elementary class was able to independently select choices from a set when previously he required two verbal prompts to complete the task. Another student was able to follow a one-step direction when given verbal cues, whereas previously he was not. Additionally, teachers' intentional adjustments to instruction have resulted in better alignment between student self-reflection and teacher assessment resulting in an overall increase in scores with their use of rubrics on a variety of assignments.
- Teachers track student's improvement and use self-evaluation forms to reflect on their assessment practices during inquiry meetings. Curricular modifications result in purposeful integration of the instructional shifts requiring students to answer text-based questions and make connections to text and use of academic vocabulary; thus improving their achievement with writing sentence structure and proper punctuation. Additionally, instructional trends discussed at inquiry meetings reveal teachers are either on-track or exceeding goals as measured by their personal growth plans. For example, one teacher improved his use of questioning and discussion techniques in literacy and math as measured by teacher observations and students' performance on benchmark assessments. Furthermore, teachers improved their station teaching, student engagement, and student-to-student discussions because of their inquiry work as evident by online teacher performance tracking results.
- Teachers notably contribute to initiatives and have taken leadership roles that promote improved student learning. Experienced staff members mentor new teachers through the development of a self-regulated program. Support staff initiated push-in services to aide their colleagues and reduce student interventions. Unit coordinators serve to ensure systems and operations run smoothly in the absence of school leadership. The teacher generated Positive Behavior Intervention and Supports (PBIS) point system has contributed to a noted decline in discipline related incidents. A trimester system was enacted to meet the needs of the transient population. Furthermore, teachers have created electives to engage their students in more challenging curricula experiences.