Quality Review Report

2016-2017

School for Legal Studies
High school 14K477
850 Grand St.
Brooklyn
NY 11211

Principal: Rosemary Vega

Dates of Review:
March 21, 2017 - March 22, 2017

Lead Reviewer: Jennifer Eusanio
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

School for Legal Studies serves students in grade 9 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

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Instructional Core</th>
<th>Area</th>
<th>Rating</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>To what extent does the school...</td>
<td></td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>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</td>
<td>Additional Finding</td>
<td>Proficient</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>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</td>
<td>Area of Focus</td>
<td>Developing</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>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</td>
<td>Additional Finding</td>
<td>Developing</td>
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</tbody>
</table>
### School Culture

**To what extent does the school...**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Area</th>
<th>Rating</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1.4 Maintain a culture of mutual trust and positive attitudes that supports the academic and personal growth of students and adults</td>
<td>Additional Finding</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3.4 Establish a culture for learning that communicates high expectations to staff, students and families, and provide supports to achieve those expectations</td>
<td>Area of Celebration</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

### Systems for Improvement

**To what extent does the school...**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Area</th>
<th>Rating</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>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</td>
<td>Additional Finding</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>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</td>
<td>Additional Finding</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>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</td>
<td>Additional Finding</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4.2 Engage in structured professional collaborations on teams using an inquiry approach that promotes shared leadership and focuses on improved student learning</td>
<td>Additional Finding</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>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</td>
<td>Additional Finding</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
### Area of Celebration

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Quality Indicator:</th>
<th>3.4 High Expectations</th>
<th>Rating:</th>
<th>Proficient</th>
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#### Findings

Structures are in place to consistently communicate to staff the high expectations relative to the school’s focus on engagement and instructional model. School staff consistently offer feedback to families on course passing rates and provide them with information on grade and content-level expectations.

#### Impact

Professional learning and the observation process lead to a system of accountability for staff. Families understand schoolwide expectations and are aware of their children’s progress toward meeting them.

#### Supporting Evidence

- Communications via email and other memoranda, such as the *Legal Docket*, provide staff with information on the school’s instructional focus on the five-30-10 model, as well as other schoolwide expectations. Teachers report that the instructional focus has also been shared through weekly meetings and information provided by content leaders. Campus and school-based professional development is provided each Friday through workshops on improving teacher questioning and student engagement to reinforce the five-30-10 model. Teachers have reported that the support they received has helped them further understand the structure of this new schoolwide model.

- Post-observation feedback offers teachers another opportunity to receive feedback toward improving their practices based on the school’s instructional focus. Debriefs with teachers occur with an emphasis on reviewing the school’s focus on student-centered approaches and engagement. A review of teacher feedback reports include strategies on improving task design, use of data for student grouping, and posing questions that allow that allow teachers to gain insights into student understanding.

- Parents report that communications including emails, letters, and phone calls to ensure they are up to date with their children’s progress. Progress reports and online grading systems offer additional feedback to parents. Monthly newsletters, which contain the school’s instructional focus on engagement, provide parents with information on workshops, such as how to understand your child’s transcript, upcoming college fairs, and the college application process. One parent reported that her child’s teachers were supportive by ensuring her child received proper services and assistance, resulting in his improvement in passing courses. Similarly, other parents shared how teachers were helpful so that their children were successful.
Area of Focus

| Quality Indicator: | 1.2 Pedagogy | Rating: | Developing |

Findings

Teaching strategies inconsistently reflect the use of multiple entry points aligned to students’ needs to enhance the quality of work products and discussions.

Impact

Missed opportunities in using teaching strategies leading to high levels of participation in differentiated tasks and critical analysis, hinder students’ abilities to engage in higher-order thinking.

Supporting Evidence

- In a transitional/bilingual Global History class, students were analyzing a quote from Machiavelli, “Is it better for a ruler to be loved than feared or feared than loved? Why?” After reviewing a video, students engaged in a class discussion in Spanish sharing their ideas and thoughts on the concept by comparing current real life world leaders and their principal. Their responses reflected critical thinking skills such as perspective and synthesis. Afterwards, students used laptop computers to conduct research to find other western leaders who reflected Machiavelli’s frame of thinking. Although the strategies and tools provided in this class allowed students to conduct deeper analysis around concepts and research, this was not as evident across other classes.

- In a co-teaching English class with English Language Learners (ELLs), students chose a theme from a text to analyze and used a know-wonder-learn (KWL) chart to share their wonderings and connections to their assigned task. Students working in groups came to consensus on their thoughts to ensure there was agreement in their analysis of the text. However, in a math class, although students were provided with calculators and note-taking paper, some students had difficulty meeting the objective of the lesson, and needed additional teacher support on foundational skills and tackling multi-step problems. Similarly, in a science class with ELLs the students were to determine how infectious diseases spread. Students exchanged cups of different solutions with assigned partners and used a lab report with prompts and questions to document their work while conducting the experiment. Although students were provided tools to support their analysis, some students were not able to articulate the purpose of the task or the effects of the solution due to a lack of additional prompting and explanation, and were therefore unable to draw a conclusion.

- Across classes, teaching practice was primarily teacher directed. In a Global History class, although student partnerships presented on the effects of the Cold War, the teacher engaged in rapid-fire questioning with students providing one-word responses. In an English class, students’ responses on feminism were directed mostly to the teacher. In a US History class, although a student was posed to lead the class in a Socratic seminar on immigration, the questioning was mostly teacher led and many students were not fully participating in the conversation.
## Additional Finding

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Quality Indicator:</th>
<th>1.1 Curriculum</th>
<th>Rating:</th>
<th>Proficient</th>
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### Findings

Staff members have developed curricula that align to the Common Core Learning Standards and content standards, and integrate instructional shifts such as text-based application and writing from sources. Across content areas, curricula consistently reflect rigorous tasks to support higher-order thinking.

### Impact

Planning documents emphasize rigorous habits and promote college and career readiness for all students.

### Supporting Evidence

- School leaders and staff decided to change their English and math curricula this year to further align with the Common Core Learning Standards. Instead of using teacher-created materials, in English, teachers are using *Collections* and in math they are using *Houghton Mifflin Harcourt* resources. In addition, a review of lesson plans reveals that teachers have adopted a common lesson-planning template that reflects using the five-30-10 model allowing for greater incorporation of the instructional shifts such as citing text in English Language Arts (ELA) and focusing on fluency in math units.

- A review of lesson plans reflects sets of learning objectives aligned with the Common Core Learning Standards leading students towards post-secondary readiness. In an ELA lesson plan, students are expected to define and explain the concept of feminism and produce a written text response, which aligns with ELA standards related to the analysis of author’s impact and choices in the development of story elements. In another ELA lesson plan for ELLs, students analyze incidents between the characters in Toni Morrison’s, *The Bluest Eye*, interpret the significance or narrative voice in the story, and produce a text analysis response which aligns to the ELA instructional shifts of citing evidence and supporting a claim.

- In an algebra lesson plan, the task asked students to determine the effectiveness of one strategy versus another when using slope formulas to solve problems involving perpendicular lines. This task required students to reason while explaining why more than one response is possible. Similarly, a geometry task required students to analyze and sort word problems into two categories, linear functions and exponential functions, and explain during a group discussion their reasons for sorting the problems into those categories.
Findings
Across classes, the use of rubrics, checks for understanding and self-assessment inconsistently serve as ongoing practices for teachers and students.

Impact
Feedback has yet to offer clear, actionable next steps and effective adjustments to support student-learning needs.

Supporting Evidence
- School leaders prioritized changes in the grading policy to reinforce the school’s new instructional approaches that reflect an emphasis on classwork and student participation. In addition, teachers report that feedback given to students now reflects glows and grows to support next steps in the revision of their work. A review of student work reflects some feedback using this structure. One student work product, which included feedback and next steps in Spanish for an ELL, asks the student to review a math essay and explain why they should use a linear function to solve the problem. However, this structure was utilized only on some student work. Some work products only contained grades with no feedback.

- Students report that they use an online grading program to determine if they are passing, and at times it includes teacher emails that provide feedback on how to improve their work. However, students also reported that grades are inconsistently placed on the grading program, as some grades are only available at the end of the marking period while other grades are listed just after exams. In addition, while reviewing their work products, only some students were able to articulate how they could improve their assignments based on the feedback provided.

- During an interview, students stated that some teachers allow them to check each other’s work. In a calculus class, students were solving math equations and provided each other feedback as they were sharing their problem-solving process on the interactive white board. At times, students self-assessed their own process as they were engaged in solving the problem. In an algebra class, the teacher used questions to prompt and support students engaged in determining whether a linear or exponential function should be used to solve a set of problems. However, instructional adjustments via teacher conferences or whole class questioning were not as prevalent across classrooms.
### Additional Finding

<table>
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<tr>
<th>Quality Indicator:</th>
<th>4.1 Teacher Support and Supervision</th>
<th>Rating:</th>
<th>Proficient</th>
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</table>

#### Findings

School leaders provide feedback aligned to the Danielson *Framework for Teaching* and the school’s new instructional model, and they have developed an effective system to assist with collaborative decision making for professional development to support teacher growth.

#### Impact

Effective systems for training and feedback articulate and supports clear expectations towards high quality teacher practice to foster professional reflection on instruction.

#### Supporting Evidence

- A review of observation reports reflects school leaders’ feedback in the form of commendations and areas for improvement that includes next steps related to improving teacher practice and reinforcing the instructional focus. As a next step, one report reminds the teacher of the importance of planning with rigor in mind when formulating questions. The school leader referred to Webb’s *Depth of Knowledge* (DOK) to provide a resource in aligning questioning to level 3. In another report, the school leader’s feedback reinforced the instructional expectations of grouping and differentiation for students with disabilities and ELLs.

- School leaders review patterns from observation reports to determine teachers’ areas of growth and to plan professional learning for staff. Growth-area patterns culminate in professional learning workshops using resources provided by outside collaborative partners and via in-school or campus-wide opportunities. The February campus calendar reflects whole school professional learning on the five-30-10 model as an outgrowth of school observation data that demonstrated a need for the entire school to obtain support in this instructional strategy. Additionally, the school-based professional development plan shares targeted training for specific teachers on areas such as developing strong student discourse and strategies for teaching literacy.

- Teachers reported how helpful intervisitations to other classrooms have been in learning how to engage students in their class. After one intervisitation, a teacher reported that she brought more peer assessment approaches into her classroom to engage students in the revision process in writing and discussion. The teacher also reported that she assigns group managers to maintain the flow of conversation. Others teacher shared similar experiences and takeaways from intervisitations, and the professional development sessions within the school and offsite collaborative partners.
## Additional Finding

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<th>Quality Indicator</th>
<th>4.2 Teacher Teams and Leadership Development</th>
<th>Rating:</th>
<th>Developing</th>
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### Findings

Teacher teams are in the process of developing inquiry-based professional collaborations and participating in the analysis of student work and data related to the school's goals on supporting student engagement.

### Impact

The teacher team’s inquiry process has yet to lead to enhanced instructional capacity and increased student progress.

### Supporting Evidence

- Teacher teams meet regularly to unpack, discuss, and plan instructional approaches that align with the school’s instructional goals on student engagement and the five-30-10 model. A review of teacher team agendas and notes reflects team members’ discussions that included the review of credit accumulation, data, and/or curricula revisions. However, the implementation of inquiry-based structures such as the use of protocols and processes for reviewing student data related to the goals of the school has just begun to take place.

- During a math team meeting, teachers reviewed student work on using geometric properties to solve a problem. Teachers used a tuning protocol and provided warm and cool feedback to the presenting teacher while sharing strategies such as using tracing paper to help some students accurately determine whether the angles in a shape are perpendicular and congruent. However, the use of the protocol and review of student work with this level of support teacher-to-teacher have not been used consistently throughout the year across teacher teams.

- Throughout the year, some teacher teams have reviewed data to inform adjustments in their curricula or instruction. In addition, teachers have provided each other feedback on their lesson plans using a lesson study format. A review of the math teacher team notes reflects a focus on covering certain units per term based on the new curriculum, reflecting on rubrics and other assessment practices, and cross-course alignment. However, structures to support the review of student data and work over time and tracking of student growth to meet goals are beginning to emerge.